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I. GREAT HALL, LACOCK ABBEY

My Life and Lacock Abbey

Matilda Talbot

Foreword by
Lord Methuen

LONDON
George Allen and Unwin Ltd
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First published in 1956

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FOREWORD

MISS MATILDA THERESA TALBOT, known to her numerous friends as Maudie Talbot, is one of those remarkable English women who, though well over eighty, retains the mental and physical energies and the interest in the world about her of a very much younger person. She was born and brought up in Dumfriesshire, her father, John Gilchrist Clark, being an Advocate at the Scottish Bar; her mother, Matilda Caroline, being a sister of the Uncle Charles Talbot of Lacock Abbey, so often mentioned in the text. It was in her Scottish home that she was given the liberal education which was to leave its mark on her character and to be a deciding factor so often in her life. Today she remains one of the few true liberals left among us.

The book itself covers a period of great national strain, following a time of comparative peace and material prosperity for England. The latter part of this period is, for many of us, so fresh in our memories that we require little to remind us of what it was like. But the earlier period, that is the time prior to 1914, is quite unknown to many today, or is but a distant and fast fading memory. It is of the greatest value, therefore, to have been given in these memoirs a story that tells, at first hand, what life was like in the later years of Queen Victoria and during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Throughout the narrative one feels that the writer has an intense sympathy with those she comes in contact with, and a human interest, born of a natural love for her fellow beings. Her occasional under-statements, so dear to our race, are, I should say, a tribute to the modesty of one who has controlled her emotions by her objective and unselfish outlook, and by consecrating her life to the service of others. She played a prominent, if not leading, part in the formation of the W.R.N.S. at Cranwell during the First World War for which she was made an M.B.E. in 1919, being promoted to C.B.E. in 1947. She has been a great traveller, with a passion for learning foreign languages.

A woman of many parts she has been, amongst other things, a professional and highly qualified cookery instructor. After inheriting Lacock Abbey from her uncle, she proceeded, after paying off the death duties, to put the house and estate in order and on an even financial keel and to live there: eventually, in 1944, making the property over to the National Trust as a measure of assuring its future existence and continuity. The book is essentially a human document, covering two widely differing periods, with the author's unchanging attitude of taking things as they come, but allowing events to shape her destiny through her confidence in human nature and in a spirit of harmony and goodwill.

The life of Miss Talbot and the glimpses she gives us of Lacock Abbey are closely interwoven; the early foundation of the Abbey, the spirit in which it was conceived, and its temporary eclipse when the religious houses were closed by the Crown in the sixteenth century. Soon came its return to a useful purpose and even to fame during the nineteenth century, with the discovery of photography in 1836 by the author's grandfather, Fox Talbot.

The personality of a house is written in its history and lives in the spirit, which is made plain beyond doubt in this account of Lacock and its ancient Abbey.

METHUEN.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE 11

Childhood in Scotland – First Visit to Lacock Abbey

CHAPTER TWO 31

Life at Speddoch – Growing up in London

CHAPTER THREE 46

Dumfries – Another Visit to Lacock – School Life – Faroe Isles

CHAPTER FOUR 70

Cookery Training and Teaching – Music in London – West Highland Holiday

CHAPTER FIVE 90

Living at Lacock Abbey with Uncle Charles and Aunt Rosamond – Visits to Norway and Denmark – French and Italian Holidays – Trips by Coasting Steamers – Visit to Ireland

CHAPTER SIX 118

Love of London – Sailors' Home in Antwerp – Death of Aunt Rosamond – Second Visit to Norway

CHAPTER SEVEN 135

Development of Life at Lacock – Visit to South Africa

CHAPTER EIGHT 153

Winter Sports in Switzerland – Cookery School in Paris – Journey to Lofoten Islands – Lacock again

CHAPTER NINE 170

The First World War – Canteen work in France – Death of Uncle Charles – An Unexpected Inheritance – History of the Abbey and Village – War Work in Alsace

CHAPTER TEN 197

Service in the W.R.N.S.

CHAPTER ELEVEN 209

Lacock Abbey once more – Tenants' Party – Queen Mary's Visit – The Abbey Pageant – Visits to Newfoundland and Philadelphia – Centenary celebration of W. H. Fox Talbot's work

CHAPTER TWELVE 233

Visits to Estonia – Cookery and Food Exhibition at Lacock Abbey

CHAPTER THIRTEEN 250

Lacock in the Second World War – Gift to National Trust – The Past Growing into the Future

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *Great Hall, Lacock Abbey* — *Frontispiece*
2. *Matilda Talbot*, 1874 — *Facing page* 32
3. *Matilda Talbot*, 1885 — 32
4. *Lacock Abbey, South-east Front* — 33
5. *The Blue Parlour, Lacock Abbey* — 160
6. *South Gallery, Lacock Abbey* — 160
7. *Matilda Talbot*, 1908 — 161
8. *Matilda Talbot in Wren Uniform* — 161
9. *Matilda Talbot as Ela, Countess of Salisbury* — 224
10. *Matilda Talbot in the South Gallery, Lacock Abbey* — 224
11. *Matilda Talbot in the Great Hall, Lacock Abbey* — 225

To my dearly loved Aunt
Rosamond Constance Talbot
in grateful remembrance of
her kindness and wisdom
I dedicate this book

CHAPTER ONE

Childhood in Scotland – First Visit to Lacock Abbey

THE earliest thing I can remember is living in a house called Dabton—a rather dreary Victorian building in the country about sixteen miles from Dumfries. I never remember feeling any affection for this house, though I loved the garden and the orchard and the little woods nearby. I also loved looking through the schoolroom window at Drumlanrig Castle, where it stood in front of the hills. Those hills had lovely names, Cairnkinna, Tynron Doon and others that I can't remember. We knew that the Duke of Buccleuch owned Drumlanrig and we imagined all sorts of strange things about him, for instance that he wore very large gold earrings, which was a complete fabrication. We thought his house was a sort of king's palace and that he lived like a king. My father, who had been an advocate in Edinburgh, was appointed estate agent, or, as it was called in Scotland, chamberlain, to the duke, and Dabton was his official residence.

My recollection of my father is not very clear. A photograph taken soon after his marriage shows him as a tall and well-built man with clear features and a serious, dignified expression of face; he was then clean shaven except for small side whiskers. But by the time I can remember him he wore a beard and generally looked tired and strained. Especially I used to think that his eyes looked tired. But he would amuse us by telling us stories, mimicking people's voices and changing his face as well. We particularly enjoyed seeing him screw up his face to look like a monkey. He used to bring things back from his long drives; there was a special kind of biscuit that came from Dalbeattie and, I believe, could only be found there, and he also brought us the sweets that he gave us on Sunday afternoons. When he had been up to the lead mines near Wanlockhead he gave us thin sheets of iridescent silvery metal, which were the skimmings from the melted lead.

They were very pretty and agreeably pliable and we thought they were real silver and of great value. But his most wonderful gift to me was a wooden cart. I expect I must have said something about wanting one. When I saw it, I was overwhelmed and hardly knew how to thank him; it was so big I had room in it for another child besides myself, and it was square, with high sides so that one could put lots of things into it. It had strong wheels shod with iron and there was a long handle fastened to the front, so that I could pull it by my hand or else tie the handle to my belt and pretend I was a horse.

As I look back I feel that my father's duties must have been very heavy, for he had to go long distances by horse transport to visit outlying farms; no car, no typist, no telephone. Everything must have been slow and laborious.

The house was large and very cold, for the ceilings were high, and the passages long and wide. One passage led from a swing-door at the bottom of the stairs to the great kitchen, where a roasting jack and screen stood in front of an open fire. The floor of this passage was covered for the whole of its length with lead; I have often since wondered why. My father had an office, his two clerks worked in an adjoining room, and beyond that there was a third room where farmers and others waited to interview him. As a child, I imagined that every home must have three rooms like that.

My mother painted well, both in oils and water colours, and she had a sort of studio near our nursery. She could gild her own picture frames, and I have a very early recollection of seeing her delicately opening leaves of goldbeaters' skin, between which lay the precious gold leaf, and warning us not to breathe on it. She used a pretty little sable brush, semi-circular and very flat and from time to time she touched it against her hair and told us this was to get a trace of the natural oil. She had very pretty hair, deep chestnut brown and wavy. She wore it very simply, with a centre parting, and I thought she looked rather like a madonna. She was a good botanist and took a special interest in every variety of fungus. We, too, were most enthusiastic hunters for fungi and there were many varieties, some of lovely colours, in

the woods and fields of that rather damp part of Scotland. Besides the brilliant and poisonous *Amanita Muscaria* in its scarlet kid skin with little white patches, there was a lovely bluish green thing as glossy as a piece of coloured china that had touches of black on its white underside and stalk. We grew very quick at noticing these things as we drove slowly by in the open carriage, and there would be a shout of "Fungus, fungus!" upon which everyone got out to see what it was. My mother was a member of the Scottish Cryptogamic Society, and she presented them with a wonderful set of water-colour drawings which she had made of all the varieties that grew in our part of Scotland. I believe that these drawings are still in the Society's rooms in Edinburgh. She also taught us to eat the edible kinds, orange-yellow *Chantarelle*, graceful *Coprinus Comatus* looking rather like a pearl-grey furled parasol, big snow-white puff balls and many others. Our neighbours were rather alarmed at the strange toadstools my mother gave her children, but she never made a mistake.

The head gardener at Drumlanrig Castle was very kind to us, and used to give my mother lovely hothouse flowers, besides pineapples, nectarines and delicious long straggly bunches of muscat grapes. Much as I loved muscats, I used to think they were quite a common fruit, whereas oranges I thought were rather rare.

I can just remember once seeing my mother and my eldest sister going to dine at the castle, my sister in white silk, my mother in black velvet, with a necklace and earrings of emeralds which suited her colouring perfectly.

It was while our home was still at Dabton that lawn tennis began to be played. I can't remember seeing anyone play, but I do remember very distinctly the measuring out of a court on the grass lawn opposite the front door, which lawn was most certainly far from flat. My mother brought a quantity of white tape and this was laid along the intended lines and fixed into position with hairpins driven down into the turf. It may well have been something stronger that was used, but my impression as a child was that of hairpins. Various ladies walked about looking at the preparations; they had long skirts and carried pear-shaped

about it. I had myself once seen him kick the horse, and I was determined that he should be punished and if possible killed. I hunted about the house and found an old pistol, and next morning I went quite close to the place where he always got down off the gig, not just at the back door, but at the top of the road close by the high garden wall, where I suppose it was easier for him to turn his gig. In this wall there was a door and when he got down he passed close to this door, within a yard of it. So when he was due to arrive I came along, set the door just ajar, put the muzzle of the pistol into the crack, about the level where I thought his head would be, and waited. In due course the man arrived, got down and as usual passed close to the door. I pulled the trigger. Nothing happened, and he went on up to the house. It had never occurred to me that pistols weren't always ready loaded. After the first disappointment, I began to feel frightened and to wonder whether, if the pistol had gone off, I would have killed him. I put the pistol back where I had found it and did no more. Soon afterwards that postman left the district, so the matter was at an end. Now, supposing I had been able to load a pistol and that I had killed the man (for his head was very close to the door), the affair would have got into the papers and I should have been labelled as a criminal child, though as a matter of fact, I was simply a child doing a very imprudent thing from a perfectly honourable motive.

Our animals were always a great joy to us. I remember once a little kitten died, to which we were greatly attached, and we asked why it shouldn't go to heaven. Possibly we had already asked Kingey and weren't satisfied with her answer. Mother said that she herself believed that the animals went on to another life. She said that surely they would not have been made so beautifully and perfectly if their life on earth—shorter even than our lives—was to be the only one. So we were much comforted. When we were not playing with the dogs and cats, we used sometimes to go into the coach house and play in the old family coach. It was a very large carriage, with folding steps to climb in by. There was room for six inside and two on the box, besides a "rumble" at the back where two servants could sit. The roof was

designed to carry a number of black trunks of special shape which were called Imperials. I never saw this coach in use, but we knew it had taken my father as a boy, with his parents, his two sisters and his tutor the whole way from Dumfriesshire to Naples. My father's father had served in the Peninsular War as a surgeon, and his health had suffered during the campaign. Naples was recommended for him as being a warmer climate. Warmer, no doubt it was, but the sanitary condition of Naples at that date, and indeed for many years after, must surely have made it an undesirable place for an invalid. It is not surprising that on the passage wall at Speddoch, our family home, there hangs a photograph of his tombstone in the Campo Santo of Naples.

Any details about the medical men who were our ancestors on my father's side I always found very interesting. There were books at Speddoch evidently intended for recording cases, fine books well bound in leather, and made of handmade paper with ruled spaces and headings engraved in copper plate. But they were all blank, so evidently the books containing actual records had been destroyed. We had a fine Raeburn portrait of one Doctor James Gilchrist, a handsome grey-haired man wearing a loose riding cloak. In the same room there hangs a poor portrait, by an unknown painter, showing a Dr. Ebenezer Gilchrist wearing a powdered wig and a snuff-brown coat with some powder on the shoulders. Dr. Ebenezer was definitely plain and had a rather crooked nose. But he had a kindly face, and as a child I always liked to look at him more than at the handsome Dr. James. When I was nearly grown up I heard some stories about Dr. Ebenezer. He was not exactly a practising doctor, who in those days was called an apothecary, but rather a consultant. He wrote a book on the value of sea voyages for health, and another on the benefits to be derived from bathing. Both these books I was told were used at the University of Montpelier, which had the reputation of being the finest medical school in France. He was short-sighted and absent-minded, and once, when walking down the riverside at Dumfries, he was said to have taken off his hat to a white cow.

In the centre of Dumfries there is a building called the Mid

Madame Petit first came to Lacock as a governess, she brought her maid with her, one Henriette Sanit, quite a young girl. Henriette had married unhappily, her husband drank and ill-treated her, so she fled back to her parents and then took service with Lalla. Henriette also soon became a valuable member of the household. She was a clever dressmaker and both witty and amusing. I remember her well, for she used to come and stay with us both in London and in Scotland. It must have been about six months after our return to Scotland from my first visit to Lacock that we had the news of Lalla's death. She had then reached the age of seventy-eight. My mother was deeply grieved and Aunt Rosamond even more so, for she had been in constant attendance on her beloved old governess, more especially when Lalla became ill and weak during the last months of her life.

Years afterwards Aunt Rosamond told me about a dream that she had, not many weeks after Lalla's death, and which seemed to her almost like a vision. Aunt Rosamond could not help wondering where her dear friend was and what her life was like now that she was no longer in her earthly body. In those days it was considered presumptuous to pray for those who had passed over, and any speculation as to their condition was discouraged. My dear aunt found it very difficult to put these thoughts out of her mind, and she was both puzzled and distressed. Then she had a dream in which Lalla seemed to stand by her bed and speak to her. She said, "I know you want to know what my life is like now, and I should like to tell you, only you would not be able to understand it yet. But this much I can tell you; we are always working, and we are never tired." Aunt Rosamond was very much comforted by that dream.

While Lalla was governess she naturally received a salary. However, she spent only just as much as she needed, and saved the remainder, which she bequeathed to my grandfather in consideration of the happiness she had enjoyed in his home. He used the money to put central heating into the house. But he did not enjoy this luxury long, as he himself died within a year. After his death my grandmother and my two aunts left Lacock and went to live in London.

In our Scotch home we saw very little of other children, but we played a great deal with our animals, my father's Dandy Dinmont terriers and our many cats. The pussies came long walks with us and greatly loved jumping over stepping-stones. There was a pony which my two elder sisters rode and I was longing for the day when I might begin, but we were becoming rather short of money, and the pony had to be given up just before my sixth birthday.

I never cared about dolls. When I was not amusing myself with the animals, I liked to play with umbrellas. They had, for me, very definite personalities. They were all grown-up people and I knew directly I saw them which were men and which women and I gave them names according to the handles, a smooth-handled one might be Minnie or Simon or Lily, a rough-handled one Margaret or Barbara. At any rate a pale-coloured handle implied a name containing the vowels "i" or "e," a darker handle "a" or "o." Parasols were invariably girls. One drawback to my interest in umbrellas was that I could not resist borrowing those which guests brought to the house and introducing them very politely to the umbrellas already living in our home. Sometimes the guests were annoyed when they couldn't find their umbrellas, but often they were just amused.

Our old nurse was something of a character, very kind and easy going, also very untidy. In fact, I think our whole house must have been rather untidy; the dogs and cats were everywhere and we boiled toffee not only in the schoolroom, but in various other rooms as well. I can remember melting cherry-tree gum, also cleaning and cooking minnows in an unoccupied guest-room. My mother did her painting in various places; I can see her now in the library making the portrait of a "Candle Fungus," very properly also called a "Stink Horn," for it has an appalling smell. She protected herself by wearing a clothes-peg on her nose, and I must say she made a brilliant portrait in an uncommonly short time and the subject was quickly removed. Once our mother showed us how to make imitation coral by coating pieces of dry twigs with red or white sealing wax. This certainly we did in the drawing-room.

It occasionally happened that visitors came, and we were sent for to come downstairs. I can't remember that we changed our dresses; we were always comfortably and untidily clothed, but old Kingey used to wash our faces and then smooth our hair, which was done by dipping the hair brush into the water jug and going over our hair with it, a chilly unpleasant proceeding which may have contributed to the painful ear inflammations that troubled me every winter in early days, though I expect the damp climate was the main factor. I found an old letter written by my mother to a friend, when I was three years old, saying that I was in such pain that I cried all night and most of the day. Mother was very kind, and hot decoctions of poppy heads helped a little. Relief came at last when the abcess broke, and then I would fall asleep and go on sleeping for many hours. I was actually deaf in my right ear till I was seventeen, but as the left ear heard acutely there was not much trouble except uncertainty in knowing where a sound came from; but after seventeen the right ear gradually recovered its function, for which I shall always be deeply grateful.

There was an old gamekeeper in the duke's employ, who taught us to fish for trout. We loved him very much. He had a curly brown beard, merry hazel eyes, and good white teeth, and he wore little gold rings in his ears. There was also our old coachman, John Corson, who not only took care of the two horses, my father's black mare and the brown carriage horse, but also lent a hand with the pigs. We admired John Corson very much and especially his arms, when he sat at tea in his cottage, with elbows on the table, and we saw the thatch of white hairs on his forearms. I used to stroke my skinny little arms and wonder if there was any chance they would ever get like John Corson's.

We had various governesses; none of them I think can have stayed very long. Among them there was one called Miss Gordon, whom I liked very much. She was very kind about playing the piano to me when I asked her. I enjoyed this enormously, especially as I had begun to learn to play myself. I was just over six years old. One night when Mary and I were in our beds it suddenly came to me that Mary could not enjoy music. She was, in fact, tone deaf and could only recognise any tune by its rhythm,

which made a clear impression on her, but she could not detect any difference between one note and another. I had that day been greatly enjoying Miss Gordon's playing, and I suddenly felt that it didn't seem fair that I could have that great pleasure and that Mary, through no fault of hers, could never have it. So, with the faith of a child so small that it really does believe that all things are possible, I knelt down and asked that the power of enjoying music might be transferred from me to Mary. I did not like the idea of losing music but I thought it would be only fair. So I went over to Mary and told her, expecting she would be overjoyed, but she said: "Darling, you mustn't do that, I don't mind a bit, I have lots of other things and I don't the least care about enjoying music. I'd much rather you had it." When I realised this was really true, I returned to bed with a feeling of immense relief. But on another occasion my faith was rudely shaken. We had a young housemaid whom I did not like; she combed my hair roughly and hurt me. I did not want to do her any harm, but I wanted her out of my way, so I prayed one night that she might be turned into a wild goose. I thought she would have a lovely life flying about everywhere, and also I thought it would be a huge joke when she came flapping into our bedroom next morning, and had to be put out of doors. Morning came and when I saw her in her usual shape I was bitterly disappointed and almost angry. For several days I would not say my prayers but addressed petitions—I don't know why—to a little toy clock we had in the dolls' house. After a bit, however, I decided that this was naughty and gave up worshipping the clock.

The governess I remember best was a Miss Collett who had lived several years in a noble German family, and spoke excellent German. I believe her French was not good, but that hardly mattered, for we had always talked French to our French nursemaid, Emilie, and also to my mother, who spoke French as readily as English. When I was small, however, I never would speak to my mother in French. If we were out together and I saw some lambs, I would shout: "Emilie, regardez donc les jolis petits agneaux; Mother, just look at the pretty little lambs," all in a breath. It was no good her assuring me that she understood

French perfectly. I stuck to my rule that English people must be addressed in English, and French people in French. Miss Collett was rather severe, and I don't think she understood small children. I never liked her and once definitely attacked her with my fists when she began to scold my eldest sister, as I thought, for no reason.

Among our earliest friends were a certain Sir William and Lady Gordon, charming old-fashioned people, who lived not far from Kirkcudbright. They never had any children, but all young people were welcome in their house, and they were much loved. Sir William was a great hero to us, for he had been in the Charge of the Light Brigade, at Balaclava. In their house there was a full-length portrait of him as a young man, standing beside his horse, and wearing a splendid uniform. But by the time we knew him, his hair was snow white, though he was still wonderfully active.

There was a certain amount of Victorian severity in our home, but it was tempered by my mother's breadth of outlook and great love of liberty. We had to get up early and we put in rather a long time at lessons, both after breakfast and after lunch, and again for an hour or so after tea. We had to be punctual at meals and more or less behave at table, but I know we were allowed to talk and chatter freely over our wholesome and excellent Scotch food. One strange privilege was permitted. When lunch was finished we were allowed to make what was called "Papa's bed in the salt." Each of us took a salt cellar and carefully moulded the dry salt (which was rather damp in that climate) into the likeness of a miniature person lying in bed, his head on the pillow and the sheet neatly turned over. I do not know how this custom started. As a final treat after lunch my mother sometimes—not always—gave us each a teaspoonful of cream containing a little sugar and a few drops of sherry. This was most delectable.

On Sunday we always went to church. At Christmas and Easter we drove in the brougham sixteen miles to the English church in Dumfries, for both my father and my mother belonged to the Church of England, but on all the other Sundays we attended what was then called the Established Church of Scotland, at Penpont, about four miles away. The service began at

12.0 and lasted, I think, about two hours. We liked the minister, who was a friend of my father's and often came to see us, driving a gig with a big clopping grey horse. We also liked the melodies to which the psalms were sung, and enjoyed watching the precentor with his tuning fork "raising the tune"; and the collection was exciting to watch, as the elders pushed and drew back the long wooden ladles along the hymn-board at each pew. As the service was long, my mother used to sustain us with raisins and grapes, which we could eat unobserved huddled down in the pew. I can very faintly remember another church, to which we went occasionally. It was very old-fashioned; there were no hassocks, but the high pews had a lot of straw in them, to keep our feet warm. It made a lovely rustling noise, and had, I thought, a good smell, though the dust made us sneeze. When we got home after church it was always 2 o'clock or later, and we found, as it seems to me now, always the same meal. A cold leg of mutton, beetroot, and a white blancmange with jam. Even as a child I thought this pretty comfortless and envied the maids, who certainly had cold mutton, but a big pot of tea as well, besides scones and cake.

On fine Sunday afternoons my father took us for a walk, but looking back, it seems to me that there were a great many wet Sunday afternoons, when some occupation had to be devised for us. Sewing and knitting, and many other innocent employments, were ruled out on Sundays, not because they were wrong; my father and mother were very clear that they were not wrong in the least, but because our doing them would distress our maids, who were strict Sabbatarians, and we were taught that we must not make other people unhappy. One Sunday, my mother gave us some prettily shaped little cards and said we could write a verse out of the Bible on each, and paint a little picture to suit, and that the cards would be given to people in hospital; she said that we could choose any verse we liked. This idea was popular and we settled down, but by degrees we drifted away from the more usual verses to be written on text cards. My sister Mary painted a signpost, with the words, "From the East and from the West, from the North and from the South." My two brothers

made a pair of pictures, one of a spouting whale, with the caption, "There is that Leviathan." The other was a big hippopotamus with, "Behold also Behemoth." The weather cleared up and we went out, and I don't think my mother ever suggested that particular occupation again. I remember once that the minister preached a sermon from the words, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." I was very angry and upbraided my mother afterwards for having told the minister to preach about that. (No doubt I had a guilty conscience.) She answered, "I didn't tell him anything. Those words are in the Bible." I answered, "Well, he needn't have picked those words out of the whole Bible." For years I used to be very much afraid of a middle-aged farmer, who regularly attended this church. For some reason I was convinced he was a Russian spy. He happened to be rather like a picture of a Russian I had seen in the *Illustrated London News*, and if ever he was near me in the aisle, as we walked out of the church, I shivered with fear and only breathed freely again when we were safe back in the carriage.

I shall always feel a great affection for the Church of Scotland. On my father's side we had the blood of the Covenanters in our veins, and perhaps that made for an affinity with the very simple type of service. At any rate, I used to feel rather lost on our rare visits to the English church, where the service was more elaborate. My mother, however, reminded us that we belonged to the Church of England, and that when we were old enough we would be confirmed, and in the meantime we must learn our Catechism. To begin with I was interested, but soon found a stumbling-block in my duty to my neighbour, and I refused to learn it. My mother said, "Why?" I said, "I won't order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters. I don't know who are my betters; and I won't obey my spiritual pastors and masters, they might be wrong. I won't obey anyone except God." My mother then asked, "What about the other piece, your duty towards God?" "Oh," I said, "I believe all that, I don't mind learning that." She then said, "Well, learn that part, and if you do all that's written there you'll do well and you needn't learn your duty to your neighbour for the present." I have always felt so

thankful that in those somewhat rigid and conventional days she left us our liberty of thought. I believe that now the phrasing of the duty to my neighbour has been altered and reads, "I will obey those who are set over me, so far as my conscience will allow." That was all I wanted.

One of our great joys was a cream-coloured rocking-horse, beautifully made and very strong. He was called Firefoot, because we said he galloped so fast that he struck fire from the stones in the road. Firefoot was given to my grandfather for his children about 1840, and is still in excellent condition at Lacock Abbey.

My father was interested in prehistoric times and used to search for arrow heads and chipped flints among the sandhills near the Galloway Coast, and we and my mother went also and helped to find them. Sometimes it was very hot and I used to think that we were in a real desert, stretching far and wide, and that the bones of sheep we sometimes passed were those of travellers who had perished. But hot and tired as we were, in time we got through the sandhills and reached the sea. How delicious it was to undress, put on our funny little serge bathing suits and slip into the cool water. I loved splashing about and resented being made to come out. One day I played them a trick. Kingey had just pulled off my bathing dress and turned to pick up a towel to dry me, when I threw myself down all wet and rolled in the sand, and in a minute was so coated that, of course, as I hoped, they had to put me back into the sea to wash it off. But mother said that if I did that again she would just make me put on my clothes on top of the sand and feel scratchy for the rest of the day.

My mother used to take us every summer to some seaside place on the Galloway coast, where we stayed in an unpretentious lodging and bathed as much as possible, and hunted for shells and seaweeds while she sketched. My father could never stay with us for more than a day or two. He was always very busy and could seldom take any holiday.

He always disliked cold weather and his health was beginning to suffer, both from the cold, and also, I think, from his too

constant preoccupation with his work. It was planned, therefore, when I was about nine, that we should all go to Plymouth for the winter; it would be mild there, and we should be near our cousins at Mount Edgcumbe. So we all went, taking our cook with us, because of the special diet for my father, and established ourselves in a lodging near the Hoe. It happened, however, that the weather turned exceptionally cold, and the water supply, which at that time was carried to Plymouth in an open channel or leat, froze, so that no water came through the taps, though some buckets of it were sold in the streets. We collected the snow, which was falling heavily, and melted it in saucepans, but a good deal seemed to go off in steam, and it took a great deal of snow to secure a drink of water. Up to a point this experience amused us, but it must have been terribly trying for the grown-ups, especially in view of my father's health, and it was an immense kindness when our cousin, Lord Mount Edgcumbe, invited the whole pack of us to spend Christmas and New Year with them.

Everything was new and interesting at Mount Edgcumbe; the ships in the harbour, the gun that fired on Drake's Island, the blue and green crystals we found in the garden paths (I think the gravel must have come from the copper mines), and all the ships' lights that twinkled when darkness fell. One day my mother told us we were going to one of my cousin's farms to see the cows. I loved animals, especially cows, and so was delighted. We saw some little calves, some pigs and other creatures, and then we went to see the cows milked. But I was very much startled, for there were men milking the cows. In Scotland men looked after the horses and the young cattle, and perhaps a bull, but nobody except women ever milked a cow. I was inexpressibly shocked and could hardly bear to look at such a sight. A cow was to me a lady, and that men should be handling her to get her milk seemed the height of impropriety. When I began to cry, mother asked me what was the matter and I told her. She explained that the men were very kind, and that the cows were used to them and liked them, and therefore did not in the least mind being milked by them. I believed my mother the more readily, as I saw

the cows were munching away quite composedly; but all the same that experience was very disturbing.

We had a lovely Christmas in that kind home. Among other things we acted charades, and arranged *tableaux vivants*. The final tableau showed Robin Hood and his men. Edith Edgcumbe was Maid Marian, and very pretty she looked. Alec Valletort and I were two outlaws and were dressed in delightfully comfortable scarlet suits. After it was over, and we were going to supper, I found I could leapfrog over the smaller chairs in my red elf-like garments, and heartily wished I could always be dressed like that. I was immensely grateful for that happy evening, and when my bedtime came, I ran to kiss Lord Mount Edgcumbe, but he took out his handkerchief and firmly said, "I will *not* be kissed by a bread and buttery mouth," wiped my face clean and kissed me goodnight.

It was about this time that something started which was a trial for several years. I was at Mount Edgcumbe sharing a bedroom with Mary, when I woke one night with a sense of being terribly wicked. A remembrance came to me how once at Dalton, looking out of the schoolroom window, I suddenly wanted to say something wicked and irreligious. A sentence came into my mind, and I had a defiant feeling that I would say it out loud (there was no one else in the room) whether it was wicked or not. The recollection of this came all over me with a rush, and I felt cold with horror and fear. I couldn't remember whether I had quite finished the sentence or not. If I hadn't said the last word, it wouldn't have mattered so much, but if I really had said it all, I knew it would have been blasphemous. The terrible part was that I wasn't quite sure and so I might have said the whole thing. I got out of bed and prayed and prayed to be forgiven, while feeling all the time that I was so wicked I couldn't really expect to be forgiven. Mary, in her bed, heard me moving and asked if I wanted anything, but of course I was too much frightened and ashamed to tell her. This cloud continued to hang over me; I might forget all about it for days and be quite happy; then it would suddenly come back, even if I was playing with other children, or sometimes when we were round the piano singing

hymns. When that happened, I would slip out of the room, for I knew I was too wicked to sing hymns.

We returned to our lodging at Plymouth and the cloud was still there, but I got a little comfort from a book, the name of which I forget. It was the story of a man who had committed many and grievous crimes, among them, I think, murder, and who felt he could not be forgiven. At last he met someone who told him clearly that God could forgive him in spite of all his sins. I began to think at last God might perhaps forgive me also, though I wasn't very sure. We went home to Scotland and I only felt the shadow at intervals, most often if we were singing hymns. But it still paralysed me with fear when it came. I have often wondered how I got that "sense of reprobation" as I believe it is called. Neither my mother, nor old Kingey, would ever have said anything to me to imply that God would not forgive me if I said I was sorry. Was it something inherited from ancestors who were pagans, or who had been taught a condemnatory version of our Christian faith? I can never know, and I only wish that if ever one came in contact with a child, who was haunted by a fear like that, it might be possible to understand the trouble and give some comfort.

CHAPTER TWO

Life at Speddoch – Growing up in London

UNHAPPILY my father's health did not improve, so he went with his sister, Mrs. Maxwell, to the Engadine, and came back rather better. But the trouble returned, and after some treatment and advice from London doctors he was sent to take a cure at La Bourboule in Auvergne, my mother going with him. But the cure proved to be of no service and my mother was advised to bring him home. I can remember their return on a chilly evening in September. My mother looked terribly anxious, and my father's hands were ice cold when we touched them. He went to his room and to bed, thankful to rest. I never saw him again; he only lived four days.

According to the custom of that time, the blinds of the house were drawn down as soon as my father's life was over, and this added to the general feeling of gloom and dreariness. I could not say that I missed him, he had always been so busy, and latterly had been so much away from us, that we had become accustomed to his absence, but I longed to do something to take away the strange sense of loss. I found an unoccupied bedroom where visiting maids sometimes stayed, and I pulled up the blinds in this room and then went out and collected all the coloured leaves that I could find, red and yellow and orange, and I decorated the room till it looked like a sort of harvest festival. That made me feel much better. Presently my mother came in and found me among the coloured leaves; she was startled and said, "Don't you understand that your father has died?" I answered, "Of course I understand," and burst into tears, as much of irritation as of sorrow. Neither my mother, nor my Aunt Mary nor any of us went to the funeral; my mother wished to go, but was told it was not etiquette for her to do so. We stood at the passage window, just beyond our beloved rocking-horse, and watched the

long procession go slowly down the drive. People came from far and near, for our father was much loved.

A day or two later I was told that we would have to leave Dabton. The new chamberlain, who would take my father's place, would have to live there, so we would go to our old family home of Speddoch, only about fifteen miles away. My first feeling was one of despair. I crawled under the schoolroom table and wept; my world was shattered. I had never dreamt of living anywhere except "at home." But by degrees the others comforted me, especially by reminding me that all the animals would come with us. So in the end I was quite cheered up. We reached Speddoch on a lovely autumn afternoon, sitting in a wagonette, with the dogs at our feet and the cats safe in baskets. Hardly had we got out at the front door, when I saw our two beloved cows, Polly and Lily, coming slowly up the road to their new home. That was my first upheaval and there have been so many since, that I have got used to moving, and don't think I have really put down very deep roots anywhere.

Speddoch was a delightful house with small rooms, and a lovely curving staircase. The walls were three feet thick but the windows were cleverly contrived to admit plenty of sunshine. I was perfectly happy there. My elder sisters went to stay with our grandmother and two aunts in London, the boys had gone back to school, and I was left with mother, my little sister Grace, and Kingey. We also had our cook Jane, and our tablemaid Ellen. We were now definitely short of money. My father had no expensive tastes and never indulged himself, but he had worked so hard as chamberlain to the duke, that he did not leave himself time to take care of his own property. Moreover, he had had unwise advice and had embarked on building new vineries at Speddoch, in the expectation of sending grapes to the Glasgow market, which expectation was not realised; there was a heavy loss. We lived very plainly: I had no governess, my mother read French to me, made me practise the piano, and I had to learn a verse of Scripture every day by heart. I chose them out of the Psalms, because those were the shortest. I was out of doors a great deal and made great friends with the gamekeeper, Robert Wallace, and his family.

2. MATILDA TALBOT, 1874

[*Tibbetts, Dumfries*

3. MATILDA TALBOT, 1885

[*Harold White*

4. LACOCK ABBEY, SOUTH-EAST FRONT

Mrs. Wallace was a very capable and extremely kind woman. I think she really loved me, and she taught me to milk old Polly, a very quiet Ayrshire cow. The Wallace daughters became my great friends, especially Robina who was just my age. I was very proud when my mother first came to watch me milking Polly, and soon I begged to be allowed to milk Lily, who was cross-bred Ayrshire and Jersey, extremely pretty and tame, but quite young and rather mischievous. She wasn't so easy to handle as Polly, and she looked round at me rather doubtfully out of the corner of her eye, but she let me have her milk and all went well till the naughty thing suddenly picked up one hind foot and planted it in the pail. I got up and smacked her, but she kept her naughty little foot there till the milk was all dirty, and I was never allowed to milk her again.

Robina and I used to play a rather dangerous game on the slate roof of the pigsty. This roof ran down from the ridge of the cow-house roof on to the adjoining pigsty. I used to take off my shoes and stockings, Robina was barefoot anyway, and we crawled on to the sloping roof, and lay on our sides there, wriggling our legs over the edge, and brandishing our toes at the pig. He snapped at them, but never quite got them, luckily for us. One day my straw hat came off and fell into the sty and the pig crunched it up with such gusto that I was frightened, and realised what might have happened to my toes. So we gave up that game.

When it was very cold, Robina used to take cloves out of her pocket to suck, and she often gave some to me. They burnt my tongue, but I think they made us feel warmer. We could buy, in those days, sweets that were called Scotch Mixture. They were simply little tiny bits of cinnamon, clove, allspice, coriander, or carraway, coated with hard white sugar. You sucked off the sugar, and eventually chewed the spice. I think all Scotch people are fond of strong spices.

After a while my sisters came back from London, and we all settled down together. Mother read aloud to us a great deal in the evenings, while we darned tablecloths and pillow cases, besides mending our own clothes. She read us Dickens, Thackeray and Scott. I loved Dickens, but got very tired of Scott. In French

we had Corneille, Racine, Molière, and Guizot's *History of France*. For some reason she also read us a good part of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, which I found uncommonly dry. We generally all sat together in her bedroom by the fire. Strict economy was the order of the day, and we learned to do a great deal for ourselves, cleaning shoes, lamps, fixing candles, etc., and Jane taught me to pluck and truss poultry, and even to skin a rabbit. Life was extremely interesting and full of variety. If we wanted to go to the town there was a two-horse wagonette called "the public machine" which plied the ten miles into Dumfries twice a week, or we could, if we needed it, hire a fly—also called a machine—from the man who drove the wagonette. I found the solid little cart, which my father had made for me, extremely useful and often dragged it about empty for the pure pleasure of the thing. I used to investigate the big rubbish heap at the back of the garden, and found all sorts of quite attractive plants, which had been thrown out for some reason or other. I put these into the cart and trundled them to the Wallaces, and to other cottages nearby, to see if anybody would like to have them, and the people were generally delighted.

One day I thought of a new use for the cart. I made harness from strong carpet binding, and traces from leather straps, and then harnessed two of our Dandie Dinmonts to the cart, fastening rope reins to their collars. I found a thick, white bone ring, and crossed the reins in it as people did in real carriages. I had a little whip for effect, but I didn't want to beat the Dandies, so when they were all fixed up, and I was sitting in the cart, I used to shout, "Rats!" and they would set off down the road full tilt and keep on for quite a while if I made enough encouraging sounds. But one day, as we were careering along, they saw a rabbit and left the road at a sharp angle, jumped over a low stone dyke, and jammed the cart against it. They pulled and pulled and finally broke the harness, leaving the cart and me behind. The dogs eventually came home all right, separately, having torn the harness apart, but my mother saw them, and said I must never do that again. She said they might have got hurt, and also that it was forbidden by law in England to use dogs to pull carts.

My mother wanted us all to share her love of astronomy; we had no telescope in the house, but I can remember her waking us up in the middle of the night (as it seemed to me), and taking us to the big window of our schoolroom, sometimes to look at an aurora, sometimes to see meteors shooting by. Once I remember seeing an eclipse of the moon, and on yet another occasion looking at a comet. I think, however, on the whole I was more interested in animals and in plants than in stars. At any rate I used to enjoy eating different kinds of leaves. Young hawthorn leaves I liked best of all, but I ate lime buds, too, and liked their funny mucilaginous taste. Also blackcurrant leaves, before they got old and tough, had a lovely aromatic flavour. Another thing I liked eating were the little tubers of a white umbelliferous plant. I used to dig them up and they looked like tiny potatoes: I believe they are called pig nuts, because pigs eat them, but I also ate them, raw of course, and thought them delicious. Another thing we all ate, with circumspection, not to say fear, were the red berries on the yew trees. They were sweetish and rather gummy, and I think their pretty colour was the best thing about them, but the thrill lay in the fact that we had been told that their hard green centres were poisonous, and we thought that if by accident we swallowed one we might die on the spot. However, we licked and sucked with great caution, and nobody ever swallowed the green centre.

I suppose most children are inclined to steal, especially sweets, but I generally stole other things. I liked olives very much, and having found out where the bottle was kept I stole the olives one by one, and when they were all gone I even drank a little of the brine, because it had an olivey flavour. I also poured myself out surreptitious tastes from a decanter of sherry which was kept in the pantry cupboard, or sometimes claret if there was any there. My mother caught me one day and I was very rightly punished. I don't remember ever stealing sweets; I hadn't the craving for them that some children feel. Perhaps that was because we had plenty of fruit to eat and good homemade jam.

As I look back, it seems to me that the house, in winter especially, must have been very dark. We had paraffin lamps in

the kitchen, and one in the dining-room, but for the most part we used candles. The maids had tallow candles which needed frequent snuffing and smelt of grease. I remember the bunches of new tallow candles hanging by their long cotton wicks from a nail in the wall to be cut off when they were wanted. We ourselves used what were called composite candles, hard, white and opaque; two of these candles were thought amply enough to light a bedroom and often we had only one. The semi-transparent paraffin wax candles had not yet come into use, and I think everyone must have had better eyesight in those days, and consequently were much less dependent on a good light.

I never minded being alone, there were so many interesting things everywhere. There was a wonderful old tent which was put up near the tennis lawn every summer. It had actually been used by my father's father during the Peninsular War, and it had bullet holes in it, and patches where the bullet holes had been repaired. I had some wonderful games in it, pretending to be an explorer. I used to enjoy trying to do any kind of work that I saw grown-up people doing, such as cleaning the old loosebox where our dogs slept, which I did many more times than was really necessary, and I loved turning the handle of the bone machine. This was really a very practical contrivance. It had a hopper in which dry bones from the kitchen were put, and when you turned the handle the bones were ground up with a most agreeable crunching noise and the resulting bone meal fell into a drawer to be collected and fed to the hens; the lime in it being said to make the egg shells stronger. I loved prowling about in the lofts; the old rocking-horse had to be kept up there after we left Dabton for there was no space for him in the small rooms and narrow passages at Speddoch. There was a harp up there too, one of the small, old-fashioned Grecian harps with little rams' heads round the top of the column. It had exactly one string left and the whole of the woodwork was wormeaten, but I used to like to thrum the single string. It was a graceful instrument, even in decay, and I have sometimes wondered since if some restoration would have been possible, but probably by that time it was too late. There were clothes in the lofts also, big silk handker-

chiefs, some cream coloured, some dark red, and a lady's dress in deep blue silk, and another dress with long close-fitting sleeves in raspberry red cashmere. I never found any shoes or gloves, but I came across some red silk stockings and promptly adopted them, and wore them with great pride. There was also a piece of gaily patterned cretonne, which I persuaded my mother to let me wear as a skirt; and a funny little creature I must have looked with my cretonne skirt, a little dark jersey, red silk stockings, thick country shoes and a wide-brimmed straw hat like the one the pig ate. But I thought myself extremely smart. At one time I tried to wear clogs like those Robina Wallace had, and it was delightful to be able to make such a clattering noise on the cobblestones. But the leather was very thick and hard and the edges of it hurt my feet, so I gave them up.

Our financial anxieties at that time made more impression on me than the older members of the family realised. If ever I were with my mother when she went into the bank, I was terrified. I knew we owed money to the bank, and I thought we might both be seized and held as hostages, until it was paid. I kept very close to mother and did not feel safe until we were outside in the street again. This feeling of apprehension, on going into a bank, clung to me for many years, and even now I do very occasionally feel a trace of it. But never for a moment did I mind going into a police station—I felt quite happy there and completely safe, for I was certain we hadn't done anything that would involve us in trouble with the police.

My life at Speddoch was a happy open-air existence full of interests of all sorts, but I did get into some kind of trouble fairly often. There was an uncomfortable feeling at the back of my mind that people thought I was a bad child, and that perhaps I really was one. One day Ellen, our faithful tablemaid, told me just after lunch to go up and change my wet shoes, which I ought to have done before the meal. I said, "No," and she persisted, so I got angry and put my hands into a dish of mince, which was on the table, and threw a good handful at Ellen. It missed her and fell on the carpet. Ellen was very strong, so she took hold of me and dragged my hand firmly and silently to the pile of mince,

and compelled me to clear it up with my own fingers, while I yelled with anger and frustration. I am sure Ellen never talked about this incident, but my mother began to feel that I should have some sort of discipline and schooling.

The next thing was that our Aunt Rosamond, my mother's sister and just two years her elder, came to stay with us. I felt a little shy when she arrived, and was very conscious of being a bad child. But I followed her up our little curving staircase, and watched her from outside the open door as she unpacked her trunk. Presently she took out a package and gave it to me: "I brought you this," she said, "because I hear you have been a good little girl." These unexpected words amazed me so much that I hardly knew how to undo the packet. It was a little work-box of polished wood with reels of coloured cottons, and little fittings inside it. I thought it perfectly lovely, and also thought that my aunt, with her honest, friendly grey-blue eyes, was the kindest person in the world. She was not pretty like my mother, but tall and thin, with rather large features, her straight brown hair very plainly done. She took little or no interest in her clothes, but was extremely tidy, and always put things away in their proper places. She was genuinely fond of young people, and much interested in their thoughts and ways. In order that I might become rather more civilised, it was planned that I should stay with her in London and go to a little day school. Unimportant as it seemed at the time, this decision to send me to London with her altered the whole course of my life.

Aunt Rosamond, with her mother and her sister, Ela, was living at No. 27, Marloes Road, Kensington. (Aunt Ela was called after Ela, Countess of Salisbury, who founded Lacock Abbey.) I well remember how my mother, little Grace, old Kingey and I all went to London together by the night train, and for some reason got out at Willesden Junction and took another train to Addison Road, and on by a cab to Kensington. I was greatly impressed by all the houses being so tall, compared with any I had seen before, and asked my mother whether they were all factories. To us today they would seem very far from tall. It was a bright morning when we arrived, and after breakfast we

went out into the street. Before many minutes had gone by, I decided that London was a most delightful place. I loved all the feeling of life, the noise of traffic, the people walking past us, the woman selling bunches of water-cress with the long-drawn call, "Waw't creese," the man wanting chairs to mend, carrying some canes in his hand, and repeating a queer sing-song phrase which sounded like "See-yehra-koff-skedumlin." The syllables were quite distinct, but I have never found out what they meant. My Aunt Ela kept canaries and love-birds in cages, and they were busy making their nests. I remember the love-birds made their nest in a half coconut. It was all most thrilling. There were crumpets for tea, and other eatables which I had never seen before. Later the gas lamps were lighted in the street in front of the house. I thought they were absolutely lovely in their brilliance, and finally went to bed feeling I had come to the nicest, cheeriest place one could imagine.

After a while it was arranged for me to attend a little day school on Campden Hill. I don't know that the lessons amounted to much, but I liked being with the other children, and I began to learn some arithmetic which I found very difficult. Incidentally, I thought the teacher spoke very funny, ugly French, not the least like my mother; but it was a good beginning, and I made some friends, notably one, May de Hamel, who lived quite near us. My aunt let me have my friends to tea, which was a great joy.

After a couple of terms my aunt arranged for me to go to Kensington High School, then in the Cromwell Road, about ten minutes' walk from our house. This was a very happy time; I loved the variety of subjects and the variety of teachers. History and arithmetic I always found unattractive, but geography was delightful, and most of all physiology and hygiene. My father's father and several others of his ancestors had been doctors, and I suppose I inherited some of their interest. I was always called Matilda Clark in the school, and there was a girl called Matilda Panell who disliked me, maybe because children in general dislike another child who has the same Christian name as themselves. Anyhow Matilda Panell made fun of me and called me Dr. Clark. I was pleased at this, and thought it rather grand to

be called a doctor, but she went further and called me a midwife, which both she and I considered a term of abuse, though I didn't exactly know what the word meant, and I felt deeply insulted. However, she couldn't shake my interest. Out of my very small pocket money I bought a sheep's heart, and carefully dissected it at home, and was much pleased to see it looking rather like the drawing in the book. After that I bought half a pig's head, and laboured at trying to find the three little bones, hammer, anvil and stirrup in its ear, but the skull was terribly hard, and I never found any of them.

I did pretty well at lessons, except for low marks in arithmetic, but often got into trouble for being untidy. I never had any gloves, and used to dodge changing my shoes when I arrived at school, so as to save time going and coming, My hair wasn't properly brushed or my clothes put on tidily. Aunt Rosamond was very tidy herself, but she had a number of things to think of, including her invalid mother, so I don't suppose she noticed very much what I looked like. She was always very kind. I remember her taking me to a shop in Kensington High Street, where I bought a little opalescent glass bowl for 4¾d. which seemed to me quite lovely, and I really think even now it must have been very pretty. She took me to picture galleries, where I used to get tired, because she was so much interested in pictures and stayed such a long while. Also she took me to concerts, which I loved, and the mere going to tea in an Aerated Bread Shop, then comparatively new, which we occasionally did, was a joyful excitement.

On Sundays I was taken to St. Mary Abbots Church to attend a service at half-past nine which was short and bright and well suited to children. Soldiers from Kensington Barracks used to come to that service, and crippled boys from the Home in Wrights Lane, so altogether it was very interesting. I began by degrees to like the Church of England service, and got to know the hymns, some of which, to my joy, were the same as those we used to sing in Scotland. There was a curate who had a good singing voice, and a friendly, straightforward way of speaking, whom we children all liked. He was the Reverend J. H. J. Ellison,

who eventually, I think, became Dean of Windsor. I think we all tended to idolise him a little and were quite excited and uplifted if by any chance we passed him in the street; but I expect this hero worship did us nothing but good.

Incidentally, it was in London that I first saw hyacinths; Aunt Ela grew them in pots, and I loved their scent. Also, for the first time I saw and smelt chrysanthemums. I still think their aromatic scent is one of the most stimulating fragrances in the world.

Mother did not think it would be good for me to stay in London through July, when it might be hot, so I was always sent home to Scotland at the middle of the summer term, which rather knocked my marks down, and I feel sure a few warm weeks would not have hurt me; but of course in a way I liked going back to Speddoch in the summer, when the fir trees smelt so good, and the days were so nice and long. Incidentally, the ear trouble grew much better when I came to London; I had one or two bad spells, after which my aunt took me to a doctor who treated me, rather painfully I must admit, but with very good results, and I practically never had earache again, though I was deaf in my right ear until I was seventeen. When I got back to Speddoch that summer everything felt a little strange; I didn't seem to be quite the same person. I ran down to the Wallaces first of anything, and threw my arms round Mrs. Wallace's neck, and she hugged me and said, "My wee darling, you're back," and I saw the cows and the Dandies and everything, but I felt the world was now a bigger place, and I had left quite a bit of my heart in London.

My aunt had two very interesting friends, Miss Emma and Miss Lucy Cons, who were largely responsible for buying the old Victoria Music Hall in the Waterloo Road, and starting it on its ambitious and successful career. At the time I remember it had not yet become a people's theatre, but was being temporarily used for various religious meetings. Aunt Rosamond and I were once there with Lucy Cons on a Sunday afternoon. A gospel meeting was to be held, and somebody asked me to go out on to the front steps and start singing a hymn to make people come in. I knew lots of hymns so I didn't mind a bit. There was

a man just inside the hall who had a violin, and I heard him say: "She oughtn't to be out there all by herself," so he came along and supported me by playing his violin. It must have been rather funny, but a few people came along, and made a sort of choir by degrees, and then a large number of people streamed into the hall, and the meeting started.

Aunt Rosamond taught me early to be independent and to be able to take care of myself. I was very proud when she first told me, when she and I were out together, that I might go home by myself. It was certainly a very short distance—from St. Philip's Church in Earl's Court Road to our home in Marloes Road. She told me that if at any time I couldn't find my way, I must ask a policeman, but never ask anybody else. It was less than ten minutes' walk from our house to the High School in Cromwell Road, but I sometimes went a little farther if I was walking with a schoolfellow; also I was sometimes sent on household errands to one of the nearby shops. If there was a fire anywhere near, or a fight, I would hover on the edge of the crowd and watch. I used to get angry with the message boys who would sometimes pull my long plait of hair and say, "Tingalingaling" as they walked by me. All the same, I imitated some of their practices; I would draw a stick along the area railings and enjoy the lovely rattling noise it made, and I would ring a door bell, hide round the corner, and see the maid come to the door for nothing. But this street-boy period didn't last very long, because London was so full of things that were more interesting.

My Aunt Rosamond had some dear and intimate friends, but she had not a large circle of acquaintances, and when I first arrived to stay with her in London, she really knew very few people. Some distant cousins lived in Bina Gardens and I liked going there because they had marmoset monkeys, which used to race about the room at tea-time and have bits of cake given to them. But most of the people we knew seemed to me both elderly and dull. However, there were exceptions. One afternoon I ran into the drawing-room and found a middle-aged lady, whom I had never seen before, talking to my aunt. She had rather rugged features and very fine expressive eyes. The moment she looked

at me, I felt a sudden great affection for her, and ran up and put my arms round her neck. She was Mrs. Fanny Kemble, the actress, whom my aunt had met when they were all in Italy. She liked my demonstrative behaviour, because children were generally afraid of her, and she was pleased to find an exception. After this first interview we met often, because she used to ask Aunt Rosamond to bring me to tea, and made me play to her on the piano, after which she would recite poetry to me. I can't remember now what any of the poetry was, but sometimes her voice was gentle and sad, sometimes gay and merry, sometimes (and I believe I liked this best of all) very loud and terrifying. You could hardly believe it was all the same person. As years went on, however, poor Mrs. Kemble became very deaf, and then I was no longer taken to see her, for Aunt Rosamond felt she would not be able to hear what I said, and we should both be unhappy, which was true. But the recollection of her personality is, even now, most vivid.

Among our childhood's books there was one especially dear to us, though there was a great deal in it we couldn't understand—Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies*. My mother used to talk to us about Mrs. Do-as-you-would-be-done-by and the severe Mrs. Be-done-by-as-you-did, and we all knew about the poor turnip who couldn't absorb all the information that he tried to cram into himself. Charles Kingsley became almost a personal friend. When I was in London with Aunt Rosamond I read more of his books; not, strangely enough, for many years, *Westward Ho*, but *Yeast*, *Hypatia*, and most of all *Alton Locke*. That book made a deep, an indelible impression on me, all the more because I was living in London, and the London of that day, especially the poorer streets of Westminster, was not, alas, very different from the London that Kingsley described in his book. I was carried away as I read: I was up in arms against the neglectful landlords whose avarice compelled honest working people to live in places where it was practically impossible to be either clean or healthy. I realised the frightful injustice of it all, and felt suddenly responsible. There was one sentence beginning: "Go, scented Belgravian, and learn for yourself what science says this London of

ours might be." I was far enough from being "a scented Belgravian," for I was just an untidy little schoolgirl; but I thought the words were meant for me, and I went down on my knees in front of Aunt Rosamond's old brown leather arm-chair, and vowed I would always be on the side of the oppressed.

I once heard a sermon in Westminster Abbey which I never can forget. Canon Gore was preaching and he referred to Socialism, which always made me prick up my ears, for I considered I was a Socialist myself. He said: "Some Socialists maintain that all men are born free and equal. This is not true. A man who is born with a grievous inherited disease is not born free, and if two men are born, one of whom has a fine brain and quick perception, while the other has only very limited and dull powers of comprehension, these two are certainly not born equal. The point," he said, "that we Christians have to remember is that, in the sight of God, everybody counts for one and nobody counts for more than one."

One spring, at St. Mary Abbots Church, there was a mission, and the teaching was given in simple language which I could understand. It made a deep impression, which, through all distractions and backslidings, has never been entirely erased, and I really felt that what I had learnt long ago from my mother, and from the Church of Scotland, was all one with what this missioner was trying to tell me now. All this was helpful and I began to feel strangely grown up. Aunt Rosamond had a wise way of dealing with children as though they were adults. I remember she once asked me my opinion on some matter, something quite important, and I first thought she was making fun of me, but she repeated her question and said she really wanted to know what I thought. So I told her, and she gave her full attention to what I said, and we debated the matter. I don't remember now what we decided, or indeed what the whole thing was about, but I was left with a feeling, which was permanent, that I must be very careful what I said, in case I might mislead my aunt. In short, the affection which I already felt for her was now mixed with a sense of responsibility for what I said and did, and that also helped me to grow up.

It was about this time, when I was thinking how varied and how interesting life was, I suddenly realised that those feelings of deep depression, that sense of reprobation which used to trouble me so much, and about which I was not able to speak to anybody, had gone, and would never come back. I had not thought of them for over a year, and I felt certain they would never come back. Nor did they. For that one thing I was and always shall be immensely grateful to London.

CHAPTER THREE

Dumfries – Another Visit to Lacock – School Life – Faroe Isles

AFTER some years my mother decided to leave Speddoch which could be let for a good rent, and we moved into the old Queen Anne house in Irish Street, Dumfries, which had always belonged to my father's family. Indeed, a couple of centuries before, it had been their town house for the winter, while Speddoch was their country home in the summer. Here, I imagine, was where Dr. Ebenezer Gilchrist was living when he gave the Sabbath evening suppers to the prisoners. This Irish Street house had been let as a school, but it had great possibilities, and we were much excited by the thought of living there. Though my sister Mary was very sorry to leave Speddoch, I didn't mind, because I lived most of the time in London with my aunts and only came to Scotland in the holidays. On one side there was a small garden with very high walls and a couple of big pear trees, a jargonelle, and a hazel pear, and in the high wall a door, giving on to a narrow cobbled street. There was a stable on the other side and some low buildings surrounding a courtyard, and beyond that a wide road, running alongside the River Nith. The view on this side was very pretty. The road widened into a space called the Sands which was an informal horse market, and there was the waterfall up which the salmon leapt in spring, and where gulls flocked in bad weather. Beyond that again the beautiful old bridge, built by Devorgilla, wife of John Balliol, in the thirteenth century. The house itself was interesting, full of character, if also full of draughts; the rooms were pretty, and in the drawing-room there was a very fine Adams mantelpiece. We settled in there, and soon all sorts of new interests cropped up. My mother helped one of the ministers with some parish work in a rough part of the town. We often had meetings in the house for various missionary societies and other philanthropic ventures.

At that time there was a great deal of drinking in Dumfries, among women as well as men. Whisky was cheap, living was hard in many ways, and there were very few amusements or relaxations. So total abstinence and temperance societies were started, and my mother threw herself into the work. She had been reckoned a good judge of wine and also, incidentally, of cheese. But she gladly became a total abstainer. Looking back, it seems to me that at that time in Dumfries, a great deal of emphasis was laid on the negative side of conduct. People promised not to drink, not to dance, not to smoke, not to attend a theatre or race meeting, not to play cards and so forth. There was considerable confusion between things that were actually wrong, such as stealing, and various pleasures, where abstinence from, or participation in, was largely a matter of individual conscience or opinion. I found it hard to see why this or that thing should be wrong, and especially I was puzzled about dancing. Sometimes I thought it was right, sometimes not, and felt rather worried. My mother had been a good dancer, but for many years had given it up, and after my father's death did not want to go to parties at all, but said that my sisters could go with other chaperones, if they wished to. I was then too young, of course, to go in any case. My eldest sister was inclined to think it was better not to dance or to go to theatres. My sister Mary was rather sad; she went to one or two dances with various people, but felt she would so much rather that my mother took her, that she gave it up. All that was temporary. In later years my mother came to think quite differently, partly owing to Aunt Rosamond's influence. I think her attitude may have been an unconscious result of her grief at losing my father.

Kingey was still with us and helped to take care of Grace, who was not a very strong child, but a most interesting little person, self-possessed, demure and philosophical. One day she was having her breakfast and I noticed she was moving her lower jaw in a very odd fashion, and I asked her what was the matter. She looked up gravely, and said: "I'm trying to eat like a cow." Another time I happened to come into the dining-room in the middle of the morning, and there was Grace lying flat on her face under the table and apparently writhing in pain. I really thought she was ill,

and called out: "Darling, what is the matter with you?" She looked up and said quite calmly: "I'm trying to walk like an earthworm." She was very fond of animals, and on her sixth birthday mother gave her a beautiful long-haired tabby kitten, which was very affectionate, and a great joy to her, though there was a moment of disillusionment when the kitten gave her a scratch. "Oh," said poor little Grace, "my pussy's got pins in her feet." In due time the kitten became a cat and had kittens of her own.They were lovely little things and Grace was never tired of watching the family party. One day she looked at me rather sadly, and said: "I don't think those kittens look at their mother in the right light." "Well," I said, "I'm sure they love her very much." "Yes," said Grace, "they love her all right, but they don't know a bit how much she loves them; they just think she's a milk jug in a fur coat." The situation could hardly have been expressed more correctly.

We sometimes stayed with my father's only sister, Mrs. Mary Maxwell, who lived at Carruchan, about three miles from Dumfries. She was a widow with no children, and was always very kind to us, her only nieces and nephews. Her husband, William Maxwell, was the legal descendant of those Maxwells who were Earls of Nithsdale, but who forfeited their title because of their support of Prince Charles Edward in the eighteenth century. She had an old-fashioned garden with high beech hedges, closely cut green grass walks, and a fascinating beech arbour. She also had an old gardener, called Houlistan, who did exactly what he liked in the garden, without regard to his mistress's wishes. Her butler, an elderly Highlander, named Cameron, was also quite a character. Aunt Mary had a very soft heart and was always anxious to make things easy for her staff. Once, she suggested to Cameron that if he would leave enough coals in the drawing-room coal scuttle we would replenish the fire ourselves, and he would not have the trouble of coming in so often. He coldly replied: "The coals shall be put on at the proper time." One Sunday afternoon we were singing hymns round the piano, and Cameron, who was usually most punctual, did not bring in the tea. After a longish interval, Aunt Mary went along to the pantry to see if anything had

happened. She found Cameron in a towering rage, standing beside his tea tray, saying he could not possibly enter the drawing-room, with such sinful things going on as playing the piano on the Sabbath. The fact that it was hymns we were singing apparently made no difference.

Aunt Mary read prayers in the dining-room after breakfast. The parrot was there in his cage, and he sometimes would squawk or draw an occasional cork, whilst she was reading, but she didn't mind. In fact she insisted the dog and also the cat should be brought in, and would not begin reading till all the menagerie was assembled. Once, when Aunt Mary was reading prayers and everyone was kneeling, the cat got up from the hearthrug where he had been sitting, and jumped on to the back of the cook, where she knelt, and from there jumped along the backs of all the other maids, as though they had been stepping stones. The maids must have had marvellous self-control not to make a sound, and Aunt Mary never noticed. Once my mother asked her why she made such a point of having all the animals brought in to prayers, and Aunt Mary replied: "My dear, their ancestors were in the Ark."

There was a pond near the house which had a special fascination for me. It was rather smelly at times, and I think it may have been responsible for a bad sore throat I got there one summer. I don't think the doctor was sent for, but I remember feeling very ill, and having, in particular, a most extraordinary dream one night. I thought, yet again, that I had done something very wicked, and I didn't know what, but I knew I had, and that I deserved to be punished. All the same, it wasn't the old terrifying "sense of reprobation." I was calm and felt it was quite right I should be punished. The punishment was that I must go on a very long journey for thousands of miles, over some great plain and the journey would take hundreds of years. There would be nothing else left in all my life except this journey. So I set out sadly in a kind of half light, with the endless plain stretching before me; that plain that was all there ever would be. The strange thing was that in the dream, I could realise an extent of space and a length of time which was not possible for me in ordinary life, either then or now. I felt as clearly what a hundred years meant

as what two hours meant, and I could appreciate what a thousand miles meant as well as what one mile meant. At last I woke, and knew I was in bed with my throat very sore and my head aching. That was all, and it was a very great relief.

Sometimes we went to Edinburgh, where we generally stayed with a cheerful family called Kirkpatrick, whom we had known in the early Dabton days. It was when my brother Willie and I were staying with the Kirkpatricks during the Easter holidays, that we had an unforgettable experience. The Forth Bridge was being built, and Ivone Kirkpatrick was a friend of one of the engineers; so he arranged for Willie and me to be taken over it. The whole thing was exciting. We went up in a workman's cage right to the top of one of the cantilevers; I clung to the engineer's coat and took no chances, for the wind was blowing in hard from the sea and there was no parapet. I can see it all now, the curly white edges of the waves far down below. We came down again in the same cage, as far as the permanent way. The cage swung a little and I was just going to put my arm round one of the uprights, when a man said: "Don't put your arm out there, unless you want it taken off!" So I drew it back. We walked along the permanent way over square iron plates with a convex surface, and after a while reached a point where these iron plates had not yet been fixed, so we just had to walk on the framework of open squares, through which the water of the Forth could be seen 130 feet below us. This only continued for a short distance, and then the iron plates began again. We reached a point where fires were burning to expand the metal and bring the two parts of the bridge into contact, so that they could be riveted together and tighten as they cooled. Men over our heads were dealing with the rivets and as we passed one man accidentally dropped a red-hot rivet just in front of us, and was heartily cursed by our engineer. Finally we got to the far side and started for home with Ivone Kirkpatrick. Willie enjoyed himself as much as I did, but when we eventually got back, he said: "If I'd known what it was going to be like, I wouldn't have taken you."

It was while we were living in Dumfries that we began to go for walking tours. Nobody as yet had bicycles, except the penny-

farthing kind. But Willie was an excellent walker and also a very kind brother, for though we each had knapsacks he used to put all our shoes, and anything else that was heavy, into his own knapsack, so that we only carried the lighter things. Considering that our skirts were much too long and heavy and our shoes not of the most comfortable, it is wonderful we were able to walk as far as we did, but we had grown accustomed to taking fairly long walks—the four miles from Dumfries to Torthorwald, where our friend Mr. Fogo lived, and the four miles back again. One very interesting walk that we took was from our home at Dumfries to a village called Kirkpatrick Durham. I think it was seventeen miles, and I remember how blistered my feet were and how Willie put vaseline on them and bandaged them up.

Soon after we moved into the house in Dumfries my aunts, Ela and Rosamond, decided to leave their home in Kensington and move to Westminster. Their mother had passed on, some years earlier, and they were both working regularly in a Westminster parish, and it seemed more reasonable to live nearer to it. So they took No 42, Grosvenor Road, very near to the old Millbank Prison, on the site of which the Tate Gallery now stands. It was very pleasant to be right on the river, and to be able to come on to the balcony at night, and watch the lights of the barges as they went up and down. It was lovely, too, in the day time looking at the old buildings of Lambeth Church and Palace, and the rather strange tall tower of Doulton's Pottery Works.

It was from this house that I came to Lacock with Aunt Rosamond, and we were guests of Uncle Charles. It is difficult to say what my feelings were at the time. The abbey and the village were beautiful and unique; I knew this and in a way I realised it. But they were something quite detached from my own life and I associated them entirely with my uncle. He lived there, and I supposed he would always live there. Also at that time, absorbed as I was with my school life and with my friends in London, I did not feel that Lacock had anything to do with me personally. I used to wander about the house, and enjoyed looking at the many portraits; I was especially interested in those about whom nothing was known, neither painter nor subject. Some of them had so

much personality in their faces, and some were so lovable, that I rather hoped they might be ancestors. But, on the whole, though I knew my family had lived at Lacock since the days of Henry VIII, I wasn't much moved by that fact, for my mind was always in the future and never in the past. Nor did I really associate my beloved aunt with Lacock, although she had been born there. Her life was now in London and so was mine, and I had all manner of schemes for the future, more especially about becoming a student of medicine.

Aunt Rosamond, and also my mother, had sometimes said in my presence what a wonderful thing it would be if ever Lacock Abbey were to become a women's college, founded on Christian principles, and thus return in some measure to the conception in which it was originally founded. This idea impressed me too, and I felt it wasn't quite right that a house which had been built for a company of women, dedicated in a special way to the service of God, should have become the home of a private family. So that, from every angle, Lacock Abbey did not seem to have any special connection with myself. I felt that it probably ought to be something more than a family home, but the idea of making it into a women's college seemed quite impracticable, for this would mean both adaptation and endowment. Maybe it could be a family home, and serve the community as well; this would not be impossible. But it all seemed so far away that I did not consider it seriously.

Uncle Charles was tall and thin and he walked rather slowly with a slight stoop. He had a greying beard and thick grey hair without a sign of baldness. As a young man he had wished to be an architect, but unfortunately he could not study properly, for though diligent he was never really strong, and in particular he was a very bad sleeper, so, after working for a time under an architect in South Wales, he had given up the idea. But he always retained a great interest in buildings, especially churches and monasteries, and the training in architecture he had taken, though short, helped him very much in the care of Lacock Abbey and village, and made it easier for him to give clear directions to workmen. He was extremely conscientious in caring for his

property, even to the point of denying himself all luxuries and many pleasures. By nature he was somewhat shy and reserved, but he was never haughty, and his tenants could speak frankly to him. Neither he nor my grandfather would ever discriminate against a possible tenant in respect of his religious or political opinions. They both held that these were matters for a man's private judgment, and all they inquired about was his reputation for honesty and for good work. My uncle was once much amused by an old lady to whose house he had promised to add a pantry or, as she called it, "a little pantony place." One day she stopped him in the street and asked him why this had not been done. He explained that the work had been delayed because of urgent repairs that had to be done to another house. "It ought to be got on with," she said, "you belong to the cottages, don't you?" He replied, "Well, people more often say the cottages belong to me, but you can put it either way." I used to hear, when I lived in London, that people in the south were apt to be subservient, but I never saw any sign of such an attitude in Lacock. My uncle was unmarried, and did not seem likely to marry, and I felt that, leading the quiet ordered life which he did, he would probably live to be a very old man, and that no one could possibly tell what things might be like after his time, and what would be right or even feasible.

As I couldn't very well go on attending Kensington High School, my mother arranged for me to go to a small boarding school kept by one Lady Murray, at Observatory Avenue, now part of Hornton Street on Campden Hill. I didn't much like being there; the lessons were dull, there were only about ten girls, and I also felt the loss of liberty very much. Knowing that part of London so well, and having been accustomed to go about by myself at all reasonable hours, I felt it very hard to have to walk through familiar streets in a crocodile. We never seemed to play games or have any exercise except just walking. Sometimes we went to the swimming baths, and I enjoyed that. Also, there was a resident German governess and she repeated bits of poetry to me, and taught me the tunes of some of the folk songs. Lady Murray was the widow of an Australian governor, and though I

don't remember any Australian girls being there, we had one from New Zealand, one from Canada, and two from Oregon, U.S.A. It was very interesting to hear them talk about their own countries, and I think talking about their homes made them feel less lonely. We also had a good elocution master, one Mr. Berridge and the things he told us came in very useful to me later on when I became a teacher. But on the whole we hadn't nearly enough to do, or to think about, so inevitably we got into mischief.

We all went to the West of Ireland that summer, and stayed in a little fishing lodge that my brother had taken on the shores of Loch Cullin in Co. Mayo, spending our time in and out of the water among boats and dogs, living mainly on fish, scones and potatoes. My mother cooked well, and a popular dinner was roast pike, followed by bilberry tart and buttermilk.

In the autumn I went again to stay with my aunts, Rosamond and Ela, at their home in Westminster, and attended the Frances Holland High School in Graham Street, which was less than half an hour's walk from Grosvenor Road. This took me past the Millbank Prison every day, and I used to see the wardresses coming to take up their duty. Two doors from us lived a very charming couple, Mr. and Mrs. Pearsall Smith. They were Quakers and Mrs. Pearsall Smith was a beautiful old lady; she wore lovely dresses of pale grey silk, or soft beige wool with delicate wide collars of real lace. When we had tea with her, she used to say to her husband: "Robin, wilt thee have thy tea?" There were two daughters, both beautiful, one fair, who was Mrs. Costello, and one dark, who later became Mrs. Bertrand Russell. (It was she who later gave me my first job.) I thoroughly enjoyed the Frances Holland School and once more had really interesting lessons. In particular, we loved learning from a Miss Johnstone, who taught us English grammar, and made it fascinating. After parsing, which was dull, and analysis, which we liked, we got to prosody, and learnt all about the different kinds of metres, and were allowed to make up some poems of our own to illustrate them.

My eldest sister, Constance, was a good deal with us in the Westminster house, and she helped my aunt with her parish work. My aunt used also to let me do anything I could to help,

and I remember we held some cookery classes in the kitchen of a tiny house in a court, off what is now called Monk Street, near Horseferry Road. We cooked over a coke fire and charged a penny each for the lessons. Five or six girls used to come, and of course we tried to make attractive dishes from the very cheapest materials. In those days, one could buy various groceries, such as rice, lentils, oatmeal, flour sago, split peas and semolina, for 2d. a pound, or seven pounds for a 1s. Fish could be had for 6d. a pound or sometimes less; kippers were 2d a pair. It was also possible to get jam and marmalade very cheaply. There were shops in those days called oil shops which sold soap, candles, all cleaning material, oil and turpentine, and in which also stood a couple of large wooden barrels, one containing some sort of red jam, and the other marmalade. Customers took their own pots with them and bought the jam by weight. I remember seeing a child coming in with a small basin to get a pound of jam; there was a big wooden spoon in the marmalade barrel, and the salesman pulled it out to use for the jam, when the child stopped him. "Please don't," she said, "marmalade's got such a twang with it." Our pupils liked fried things best, especially pancakes. When the class was over we generally let the pupils eat up the food, reserving something nice for the woman who kindly let us use her kitchen, and of course we paid for the coke and the light. I remember one girl, I think her name was Mary Anne Owen, who lived with her grandmother. She learnt to make pancakes quite well. One day, having bought an egg, flour and all she needed, she got into her grandmother's kitchen, locked the old lady out, and made pancakes at the open window, tossing them in view of the street, and a crowd collected. She made them, tossed them, and ate them all at the window, and only afterwards let her angry grandmother in. Another girl I remember now for her lovely dignified name. The others all called her "Kate Corsy," but she wrote it "Katherine de Courcy." I have often wondered where her forebears came from.

I got quite into the habit of going about alone in what was then a pretty rough district, and never felt frightened. Once my aunt sent me, I don't suppose it was any later than about five o'clock in an autumn afternoon, to fetch a certain Mrs. McCarthy, who

lived in the little court just above the room where we had our cooking classes, and bring her to a mission room off Great Peter Street, where a service was being held. I duly went and persuaded Mrs. McCarthy to come with me, but she was rather drunk. However, I got her downstairs and out of the house, and into the street, and finally down Great Peter Street, But whether the fresh air made her worse, or what the reason was, she swayed so much, I had a job to get her along, holding her firmly by the arm. The passers-by jeered at us as we swayed from side to side of the road, she pulling me with her, but finally I got her safe into the mission room and was rather proud of myself. She fell asleep in a corner of the room and made no trouble.

Another time I had an experience which was rather frightening; it was also in autumn, but in the afternoon about three o'clock. My aunt had given me a message to a woman who lived on the upper floor of one of the small houses in that same little court. The ground floor was occupied by a certain Mrs. Breewood, who was a flower seller. After delivering my message I came quickly down the stairs and was just passing Mrs. Breewood's door when it suddenly opened and a hand was thrust out which seized me, dragged me in the room, and locked the door. This hand was ice cold, and the room was quite dark. There I stood, afraid to move, while the woman walked about in the dark room muttering to herself. Then I felt her push something cold and wet against my hand, unlock the door, still muttering, and push me out into the street. She locked herself in again, and I saw that I had a bunch of rather faded white narcissi in my hand. Next morning she was taken to the asylum. She was a hard drinker, and probably had had little food. The poor thing meant me no harm. She knew my aunt, who was kind to her, and probably she recognised my voice, and wanted to give me some flowers, though her poor mind had gone. All the same I was very much frightened. They were miserable little houses in those courts, and even the tenement buildings were not much better according to later standards. For all that some fine characters lived in them.

My brother Willie came to London and spent some months with us in Westminster, and we were a very happy party. He was

working in the British Museum and I was, of course, still going to school, but we had great fun on Saturdays and Bank Holidays. One Saturday we walked from our home in Westminster to the West India Docks, stopping for lunch at Crosby Hall, which was then in its old position in Bishopsgate, and looking into all sorts of interesting buildings, including Great St. Helens. I can't remember now what they all were, but I know it was a thrilling day, especially down at the docks watching the ships. We came back by bus, for I was rather tired. My brother was a splendid walker, but he never wanted to overtire his sisters. I saw locust beans for the first time in my life, and we both chewed them and I liked the sweet taste in spite of the odd smell, and the fact that you couldn't really swallow all that fibrous stuff, but had just to suck the juice, and then—to put it politely—to "reject" what was left. We bought some lychees as well and ate them sitting on top of the bus. They were open-topped horse buses in those days, and there was no better place from which to admire London. I must confess, I greatly regret their passing. The lychees led us into temptation; we couldn't resist dropping the sticky little stones over the side of the bus to see where they would fall. One fell on top of a city man's top hat and stuck there. He felt the smack and looked above him to see where it had come from. I am not sure if he suspected a passing bus, but anyway we thought we had better call off that game. When we got home to Westminster I felt I had been half over the world. London is a wonderful place.

That summer my mother and sister Mary went on a sketching trip to Norway, and brought back some illustrated papers which a Norwegian lady had asked them to hand in at the Scandinavian Sailors' Home near the West India Dock. So one afternoon Mary and I set off to do this, and quite a string of events grew out of this small circumstance. At the Sailors' Home we met a young Norwegian girl, Fredrike Betzmann, who was giving temporary help to Mrs. Welin, the Swedish lady who had endowed the Home and who managed it. As Mrs. Welin was out, we sat talking to Fredrike, who spoke very halting English, and found that she very much wanted to improve her knowledge of the language, but that in the Home nearly everybody talked Nor-

wegian or Swedish. Also she sang to us and she had an extremely pretty voice. The upshot was that she frequently came over to us in Westminster, and we sometimes went to see her at the docks. She improved her English, Mary improved her Norwegian, and I began to learn it. Mrs. Welin was rather a severe lady, but hospitable, and we used to enjoy her coffee and cakes, and listening to music. It seems to me now that everyone who came in there was able to sing. Once, a certain merchant captain, one Augustus Hogstedt, was staying there, and he sang Schubert's and Schumann's Lieder delightfully, Fredrike playing his accompaniments. Suddenly he turned to us and said, very apologetically: "My voice is spoiled vid screaming on the sea." But we didn't at all agree with him, and begged him to go on singing to us. Sometimes we stayed on for a sort of mixed meal in the seamen's dining-room at 6.30 p.m. There were all sorts of amusing foods I did not know, including peas boiled whole in their pods. They were very good, but it took a little skill to withdraw the papery sides of the pod from one's mouth after eating the soft part. We were soon able to talk Norwegian pretty easily.

When Fredrike was no longer needed in London she came to stay with us in Scotland, and this proved a great success. Her English was never very good but always understandable, and often most expressive, indeed dramatic, and she was most good-tempered over her mistakes. Mary and I went to meet her at Dumfries, and we called a porter to get her luggage. She said, referring to her trunk: "I have one coffer," and she strode along the platform with us and suddenly sprang into the van, picked up her heavy box by the handles and swung it out, to the porter's amazement. She was tall and square-shouldered, and exceptionally strong. Once, after a journey with me, we found she had left her fur neck wrap in the train. Next morning we decided to go and ask for it at the Lost Property Office. Her English was now much better, so I said: "Would you like to ask the man, Fredrike, or shall I?" She said she would, and went boldly into the office and said: "Yesterday when I was travelling from Dumfries I left my skin behind me." She was not very fond of animals—I think they had no pets in her home. When she first saw my sister's

Dandie with her puppies she said: "Will not the great devour them?" We explained that mother dogs did not eat their puppies. Once, to tease her, I held up a pretty kitten, saying: "Kiss it, Fredrike." "Thank you," she replied most indignantly, "I kiss only men."

When Fredrike went back to Norway we had the kindest letters from her parents pressing us to come and stay with them for as long as we liked.

Through living in Dumfries we made many new friends. There was an extremely pretty and charming girl, Winifred McKinnel, sister of the Norman McKinnel who became so distinguished an actor, and there was a Minister, one Mr. Fogo, who lived about four miles from Dumfries. One of our ideas was to start a private magazine; a girl called Carrie Thomson, daughter of a doctor in Dumfries, was the main originator, but Winifred McKinnel and all of us at home became enthusiastic about it. For some reason that I have never known, it was called *The Sphinx*. It came out monthly in exercise-book size, and was handwritten by Carrie Thomson, and then cyclostyled. Looking back on that time, I am afraid we all thought ourselves very clever, and there was absolutely no subject on which we did not feel competent to pronounce a definite opinion. Plenty of copy flowed in, and we even managed to put one full-page illustration in each issue; but the main business was to get subscribers, and we tormented our friends to give us 6s. a year for this purpose. Later on we decided to get *The Sphinx* properly printed, and tormented our friends still more.

I had now nearly got to the end of my schooldays, and still rather dreamed of becoming a doctor, but the long and costly training was beyond what my mother could afford, so that idea had to be given up, and some friends suggested I might train as a cookery teacher. I liked the idea but was not quite sure. Another friend suggested that I might get a job as an Inspector of Nuisances. My good kind Aunt Rosamond was interested in this, and we went together to lectures at the Parkes Museum and on expeditions of many kinds. Our fellow students were chiefly men, but there were women also, some of whom were nurses. Aunt Rosa-

mond was greatly interested, partly because of her indignation over insanitary homes in London, and her admiration for Miss Octavia Hill and others who were trying to make things better. She came with me everywhere. I remember one expedition in particular to the sewage works at Barking, and how the outfall was treated with some chemical that made it innocuous and the effluent at last was pure water. There were, of course, solids that could not dissolve, including all manners of wires, metal, glass and other objects which had been thrown into the drains. These solids were all carried out to sea in vessels called sludge boats, which were fitted with a great tank which could be opened when the boat was taken out somewhere beyond the mouth of the Thames. One of these boats, named Belvedere, was lying by the riverside, ready for our inspection. She was, of course, empty and spotlessly clean. We went over her and then, to my delight, were entertained to tea on board. This was a pleasant interlude in a rather tiring day, and I felt sure also that very few people could have had the chance of taking tea aboard a sludge boat.

In the spring of that year, my Aunt Ela, never so robust as Aunt Rosamond, had a severe attack of influenza, to which she succumbed in spite of good nursing and the care of a competent doctor, who was a friend of the family. She ran a very high temperature and wandered in her talk, not knowing where she was; but she did not seem distressed, and before long she was quite unconscious. Aunt Rosamond and I were with her when she died, and I remember her faint breathing and her quiet face in the rosy light of the sunrise. Her bedroom looked east and gave upon the river. Most of all I remember the sweet, brave face of the nurse, bending over her and gently holding her wrist. The light in the east grew brighter by degrees, and then the nurse lifted her eyes and looked at Aunt Rosamond, and I knew the end had come. The next day my mother arrived from Scotland to be with us until the funeral was over. Aunt Ela was buried at Lacock.

Mother thought I looked tired, and as I was probably going into training as a cookery teacher that autumn, she suggested I went a trip abroad with my brother. I was delighted and wrote to Willie at once, saying that most of all I would like to go to the

Faroe Isles. I had never been abroad, so any place would have been interesting, but I had always had a hankering for the Faroes. People seemed to know little or nothing about them, and yet they were not so far off. It took Willie a fortnight to find out how we could get there. Finally he discovered that the Danish mail steamer plying from Copenhagen to Iceland called at Leith, and then at Thorshavn in the Faroes, on her way north. Of course, at that time both Iceland and the Faroes belonged to Denmark. Meantime I went to the Reading Room at the British Museum, to study the limited amount of literature about the Faroes. Most of it was in English, but one little book was in Danish, written by a certain Professor Hammershaimb. Also I got a big Admiralty chart of the islands, which was so beautifully printed that one could picture everything. I had never believed they were so wonderful. The great cliff on the north-west which the sailors call Myling Head rises 2,200 feet. sheer up from the sea, and is the second highest cliff in Europe. Then there was the curious shape of the islands, long, narrow and steep, rather like great knife blades, the central ridge running up to 3,000 feet on the main island. There was a lake, I forget its name, which lay close behind one of the cliffs and poured over its edge in a great waterfall, called Bosdali Foss. This chart fascinated me, and I studied it for a long time every day.

We took very little luggage, just comfortable clothes, suited for rain and wind, and we also packed a few little odd things that we thought might do as presents for people. I wrote to the Danish Consul in London asking for a letter of introduction to the Governor, or Amtmand, of the Faroes, which he very kindly gave us. We thought that the small amount of Norwegian we both knew would carry us through in Danish, the two languages being very similar, though rather differently pronounced, and therefore sounding unlike in conversation. So, after everything was ready, one evening we went down to Leith to go aboard the *Laura*, and I was in a great state of happy anticipation. We found a large company of people on board, mostly Danes who were making a trip to Iceland. They were very friendly, and so was the overworked young stewardess who managed to find me a bunk in the

ladies' cabin, while Willie was given a sofa in the saloon. Suddenly he realised he had left his camera at the place where we had had tea, so he posted off to get it. Meanwhile, I prowled about the ship and got more excited every minute, watching all the different people and trying to understand what they said. Willie did not reappear and the ladies began to go to bed, so I lay down in my bunk and thought, "Well, I hope he does get on board in time, but even if he doesn't I'm going." Of course he had the money and the tickets and everything else, but I didn't think of that. I vividly remember lying there and hearing a lady singing in the saloon. She was a Swede, called Elin Afzelius. She had a beautiful voice and she sang a lovely Finland folk song, "Fjerran Han Droyer," that I had never heard before. The ship was moving now and I felt I was really going to the Faroes. Next morning Willie was there all right, with his camera, and much amused to hear I had been quite prepared to continue the journey without him.

The old *Laura* was nearly as broad as she was long, it seemed to us, and she rolled as she went through the North Sea, but we were both good sailors, as were most of the other passengers. Almost at once we were asked to join a reading circle. The company generally sat up on the bridge, Captain Cristiansen being a very easy-going person. The book was a translation into Danish of the popular *Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, so, knowing the story, we could sometimes be of use. One thing was extremely interesting to see; when the wind was favourable the *Laura* hoisted her sails, and we had the excitement of seeing them run up and down, the men going about the rigging like monkeys. The voyage took us, I think, five days, and we never had a dull moment. Our special friends on board were three; an elderly business man from Copenhagen, one Grosser Hansen; a girl of my own age, Jelma Olsen, who was an orphan, living with her guardian's family in Jutland, and a young schoolmaster, Jorgen Hammershaimb, nephew of the man whose book I had read in the British Museum. He was delighted when he heard this, and said: "I did not know my uncle's books were read in London." I didn't like to tell him that I suspected the only copy was the one in the British Museum. Like all Scandinavians they loved dancing, and the weather being

so good we danced folk dances on the deck, all very simple ones, and we sang the tunes as we danced the steps. One lovely afternoon when a good many of the passengers were asleep, I went up to the bridge and found Jelma in charge of the wheel, with a sailor beside her. The captain and the first mate were both below and there was no other officer about. Jelma was thoroughly enjoying herself and it wasn't long before I begged her to let me have a turn. She agreed. I watched the compass and for about twenty minutes diligently kept the course; then I couldn't resist the temptation of going first hard to port, and then to starboard, to see how the old thing's nose went round. The sailor grinned but said nothing. I imagine we were in deep water, that time was no object, and so nothing mattered.

At last we saw in the distance the first of the Faroe Islands. After about twelve more hours we got to Thorshavn, a little harbour on the east side of the largest island, sheltered by an islet lying east of it. The Governor's house stood just above the harbour, so Willie and I dug out our letter of recommendation and planned to go up and present it. After the briefest and most light-hearted of customs examinations, we took our modest luggage to the one tiny inn which existed in Thorshavn. But we were told that the Governor, who was always called the Amtmand, was very soon himself coming on board, as he was going to Iceland in the *Laura*, and would only be coming back on her return voyage. This was rather a blow, as it seemed we should miss him altogether; but we returned to the ship, and presently he came on board and, hardly glancing at the letter we brought, greeted us most warmly, and said he was more than sorry that he had to go to Iceland, but that we must continue with him on the ship, as far as the port of Klaksvig, in one of the northern islands, where also Grosser Hansen was going, and we should all dine and stay there with Mr. and Mrs. Djurhuus. So we brought our stuff aboard again, and all went on joyfully to Klaksvig.

The Governor was kindness itself and presented us to the Djurhuus family as though we had been his relations. There was a middle-aged father and mother, a dark-haired daughter of twenty-five or so, and a son of about twenty, all with charming

manners. Willie and I felt a little shy in our travelling clothes, which were all we had, for we found ourselves quite in society, sitting in a pretty drawing-room waiting for dinner to be served. We all went into dinner arm-in-arm, Mr. Hammershaimb taking me in, and we enjoyed a sumptuous meal. The son and daughter dined with us, but got up from time to time to serve wine; Magdalena looked very graceful pouring claret out of a big silver jug. At the end of the meal we all stood up, and as I was the only woman guest I thought I had to lead the way to the drawing-room. But when I got there and turned round, I found I was alone, and no one had followed me. Presently Mr. Hammershaimb came to me laughing and said: "I was good enough to lead you in to dinner, but it seems I am not good enough to lead you out again." I was scarlet in the face, but he explained that I must first curtsey to my hostess, and thank her for the meal, and then shake hands with my host and thank him, afterwards taking the arm of my dinner partner to walk into the drawing-room; all which I duly carried out, according to Mr. Hammershaimb's directions.

Next morning I was up early, and went out and met a dear tame little white kid with black hooves and black horns that came and sat in my lap. Another day I was sitting with a little girl on the grass at Klaksvig, when she showed me a way of tying grass and wishing, which, I think, must have been some old pre-Christian spell. Two people work together: one person takes five pieces of grass (or string) of equal lengths, say 12 inches, lays them evenly together and holds them firmly in the centre. The other person forms an unspoken wish and knots two ends of string together, at the side of the bunch, then knots two more ends, leaving the fifth end free. She repeats this at the other side of the bunch, and then knots the two spare ends together. The first person, who has been firmly holding the bunch, now lets go, and sees what figure the strings have made. They may be several detached, or interlaced circles, or a figure of eight. In none of these cases will the unspoken wish be fulfilled. But should the string form a single complete circle, the wish will be fulfilled. It is, of course, important that the knots should be firm. The number five is interesting, for spells are more often connected with three

or seven. One might think that a single circle would rarely be made, but it happens fairly often. I once saw a friend make a circle three times in one evening, but I never knew what her wishes happened to be.

The Governor went on to Iceland in the *Laura* and we were left in the care of Mr. Hansen, who had been lent the Governor's boat to go round some of the islands on a business trip, and the Governor said we could go too. This also was new and unexpected. We sat in the stern of a smart boat, rowed by six men in uniform, and we were welcomed at each little place where we stopped. A most impressive thing was that as soon as our boat was seen approaching a village the Danish flag was run up, and we felt quite like Royalty. That afternoon we reached a fairly large village called Eide, where we were to stay with the local merchant, who was also general manager of most things. His eldest daughter, Elin, a girl of seventeen or so, received us rather silently. I was afraid she was not pleased to see me, especially as Mr. Hansen had told us there were already two guests in the house, Colonel Fielding and Lord Newborough, who had come to fish. Elin presently brought in a tray of coffee and said her parents were busy, but would come by and by. Then she led me upstairs and showed me a nice clean attic bedroom. Suddenly she sat down on the bed and said: "All my life I have been wishing that an English girl should come and stay in our house and now at last you have come." She smiled at me and said: "You do not mind my saying this." I said, of course, that I was as pleased as she could be.

During the several days we spent at Eide we became great friends. I sometimes helped a little in the kitchen; both Elin and her mother cooked very well. There was a younger daughter called Elgine, aged fifteen, and a boy, Niels, of thirteen. One day some more people arrived to stay, so the sleeping accommodation had to be re-arranged. Willie was given a bed in the hay loft, and I had a sofa in the small sitting-room, which was next the dining-room. We had great fun arranging it all, and I went to bed quite happily on my sofa. In the morning Elin brought me a cup of coffee as usual, and I got up and dressed. After a while she came in again, and said: "Are you quite ready? Will you want to be in

your room any more?" I said, "Oh no, I am quite ready." She then asked: "May my brother Niels come out of the cupboard?" It seems that the poor boy had been put overnight into a big closet, used as a cupboard, which opened from the little sitting-room. Fortunately it had a skylight. There he had slept and patiently remained until permission was given to come out.

It was from Eide that we had the wonderful experience of going under the Myling Head in a small boat. The sea was calm and what wind there was came from the land. A great piece of the cliff had split off from the rest and formed a kind of stack. The men shipped oars and we ran on a long wave between the stack and Myling Head itself, in deep shadow. It was wonderful having weather that allowed us to do this. Another day we went, for some reason, up a sort of narrow fjord or creek to a place called Saxen, where there were only a couple of houses, and where it seemed the inhabitants had never seen an English woman before. They came up to me and patted my arm, and felt the stuff of my clothes, and asked questions in Faroese, a queer language that we could not understand. I believe it is akin to Icelandic, but luckily everybody spoke and understood Danish.

Mr. Hansen having finished his business, we returned to Thorshavn, said goodbye to the Governor's boat, stayed a night at the funny little inn, and then joined forces with Mr. Hammershaimb, who was going to visit people he knew in another part of the islands. We now had no Governor's boat, and there was a good deal of stiff walking, but we had a couple of men to carry our things, and we often picked up a boat just to carry us across a narrow fjord and save a long walk round. I liked the Faroese men's dress very much; every part of it was homemade. They wore close-knit jerseys of brown wool, a jacket and knee breeches of darker brown hand-woven stuff, a tall knitted cap with the top turned over, thick knitted stockings, and shoes of uncured sheepskin laced round the ankle. My brother was interested in these shoes, which were very light, and yet able to withstand walking over rocks, and he said he would like a pair. But he wasn't quite prepared to have a piece of soft flabby sheepskin that was salted, but still wet, fitted over his foot, and to be told he must

wear it until it dried into shape. I forget what the upshot was, but I think he gave the skin to one of the men. On Sundays and festivals the men's dress was extremely gay; the jersey was deep red, the jacket and breeches navy, the stockings white, and the tall cap striped in various colours, chiefly red. Most of the men were quite good looking, with close curling dark brown hair and beard, hazel or dark grey eyes, and fresh sunburned skins. The women also had very pretty curling hair, usually parted in the centre, but their dress was not interesting, generally brown or dark grey, sleeves to the elbow, a head kerchief, and an apron covering the skirt. I don't know how they dyed their red or navy wool, but all the other shades could be managed from the varying fleeces of their sheep. Mr. Hammershaimb knew the islands very well and was a splendid guide.

We had a delightful compliment once from him. He asked us whether we did not admire Copenhagen. We replied that we had never been there. "Well," he said, "I am much surprised to hear that, because you have the best Copenhagen manners." I think, perhaps, we owed this commendation to the fact that Willie learned the Danish way to remove his hat when greeting a lady, In England, a man takes off his hat with his right hand, replaces it quickly, and then shakes hands. The Dane, on the contrary, takes off his hat with his left hand, shakes with his right, and only afterwards replaces his hat. Our good manners, however, were once put to a severe test, when Mr. Djurhuus served us with what is considered a Faroese delicacy. It was raw dried mutton cut in thin slices. We all know that smoked salmon, smoked cod's roe, and smoked ham are excellent raw, but this mutton had been neither smoked nor salted. It was somewhat sticky to the teeth and the flavour made you think of all the woolly old sheep you had ever met in your life. Only by sprinkling it, extra heavily, with salt and pepper, could I get it down at all.

Willie and I found some interesting pieces of various minerals lying about on the steep slopes, bits of tufa, chalcedony and rough opal, besides a green stone rather like malachite. The islands were all of a volcanic formation, mostly basalt. It seemed strange that there should be no trees anywhere, only a few stunted bushes

near the people's houses. There were no roads, only tracks, and no horses, ponies or carts. Everybody either walked or went in a boat. The volcanic soil is very rich and there were patches, sometimes large patches, of deep green grass, and we knew the Faroese sheep were famous both for wool and mutton. Wherever we stayed, at a pastor's house or a merchant's in some little hamlet, the dinner was practically always the same. A good soup, roast mutton of the best, with small round potatoes and plenty of cranberry or currant jelly. The next course was generally the favourite Danish sweet called rodgrod – a sort of jelly made from fruit juice of some kind which has been lightly solidified; it is served cold with cream.

Towards the end of our trip, Mr. Hammershaimb took us to Bosdalh Foss. It was a stiff walk, but we got up to the lake and saw how the water just poured out by the seaward end and down the cliff like water poured out of a basin. I was afraid to go very near or to look over. The others did, but I lay down flat and crawled as near as I dared to the edge. When we got back to Thorshavn we found various festivities being arranged in honour of St. Olaf's Tide. One of these was a performance in Danish of Molière's *Malade Imaginaire*. At the end bouquets were thrown on to the stage, if one could call them bouquets; they were just bunches of long, leggy monkshood, probably the only flowers available. On St. Olaf's Day itself there was a service in the church, for was it not St. Olaf who brought Christianity to Norway, and the Norwegians who brought it to the Faroes? But after that was over we all went out on to the hillside, and danced in great circles, chanting some hymn. Mr. Hammershaimb taught us the words and we found that the hymn, part of it at any rate, was in praise of Odin and Thor. The women walked or sidled quietly round in a circle but the men leapt and jumped with great vigour. If three men were together the two outer ones swung the middle dancer into the air, assisting his leap, until he really reached a surprising height. This went on until evening, and when my brother and I got back to Thorshavn we wondered what his bishop would say if he knew we had been dancing and singing praises to Odin and Thor.

The *Laura* came in again, bringing Governor Buchwaldt and all the merry company we had met before on board. Willie and I spent the last evening at the Buchwaldt's house, and it was very pleasant. Mrs. Buchwaldt looked very fragile and evidently was, to some extent, an invalid, but she made us very welcome. They were both most insistent that we should come to the Faroes again, when he would be at home, but we told him how kind everyone had been to us in his absence.

Although the weather was rough our voyage home was very pleasant, and we got to know our fellow travellers better and better. We had many invitations, especially from Mr. Hansen, to stay with him and his daughter in Copenhagen, and from Jelma Olsen to stay with her in Jutland.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cookery Training and Teaching – Music in London – West Highland holiday

At last I went back to London and started training at a cookery school. In those days the training was simpler because one could take a cookery diploma by itself, without qualifying in the other domestic subjects; but the cookery training was very thorough. The first fortnight I spent in the scullery; this was definitely hard work and harder than it need have been. For instance, we cleaned saucepans with our bare hands which were first soaped then dipped in sand. Rubbing the metal with our sandy hands was a most uncomfortable business. We cleaned the best copper stewpans with pieces of lemon dipped in salt, and there was nothing labour-saving about anything we did. I thoroughly disliked this work, but I remember looking through the scullery door and seeing the staff teachers sitting at tea at the far end of an adjoining room, and saying to myself: "I'll stick to this even if I don't like it, until I am asked to be a staff teacher." As a matter of fact, at long last I was actually asked to come on as a supplementary staff teacher, though I did not accept the offer. There were some kindly stalwart women cleaners in the scullery who used to help us and sometimes take on the job themselves when our fingers grew sore. I remember one evening being at the South Kensington Museum with a friend and going into the cloakroom there, and to my amazement I saw Alice, one of the kindest of our scullery women, looking quite smart and delighted to see me. It seemed she led a double life. The cookery school scullery by day and the museum cloakroom in the evening. People had to work hard in those days.

I always liked cooking but did not altogether like the school. There was a kindly secretary, to whom we could come with our difficulties as to rules, etc., but I did not think the actual cooking

was as good as my mother's, which was French, or as old Jane's, which was traditional Scottish. All the same, I learned many things which were very useful. The teacher who was over me in the practice kitchen certainly disliked me. When I was saying what I believed to be true, she told me not to tell her lies. And once, when she was displeased with the way I was mixing some dry ingredients she just took the basin out of my hand and upset it on the table as she went by. I realised afterwards that her irritability was partly caused by ill health, but at the time I used to feel sometimes frightened, and sometimes indignant; and though I could keep my temper during the day, I used to cry heartily when I sat in the evenings with Aunt Rosamond, who was always a sympathetic listener. I am glad to say my aunt never suggested I should give up the training, she just told me to stick it, and that better days would come in time. Aunt Rosamond made me get up early so that I should have a really comfortable breakfast, and time to see that everything was ready in my satchel that I would need during the day. This habit that she taught me was very helpful when I came to be in regular work, and had often to teach at several different schools on the same day.

After the first term at the training school, I was set to help some of the new students in their practical work. Some were very pleasant to teach, others pretty difficult. I remember a girl being brought to me, who gave her name as Miss Lawrence, from Banff. I was pleased at having a Scotch girl with me, but she was very clumsy. I had to show her how to separate the yolk of a raw egg from the white, and she watched me and seemed to get the idea. I then handed her another egg, and she just took hold of it and thrust her two thumbs into the middle of it, so that it burst all over the place. At that moment the irritable teacher came by and said angrily: "How can you allow Miss Lawrence to break an egg like that." However, the work grew more interesting and I wasn't always under the same teacher. When I began demonstrating I had an excellent teacher for that part of the work and I shall always be grateful to her. I enjoyed talking just as much as cooking, and that fact helped me. So the first six months went by,

and I had an examination, in which I failed because of my mistakes in the arithmetic section. There was a second chance of sitting for the exam, and I was very lucky that time, for I managed to get 987 marks out of a possible 1,000. Soon after that I was given my Teacher's Diploma for plain cookery.

Alys Pearsall Smith asked me if I would give a few lessons to her girls' club near St. Pancras Station. There were about eight girls in the class, and they were delightful to teach, for they knew nothing whatever about cooking and were full of interest. I had to manage the food as inexpensively as I could, and use only such materials as they could buy cheaply in their own neighbourhood. A great success was what we called bread and jam fritters. We found we could make them for about a farthing each, at the price of materials in those days, not, of course, reckoning fuel or labour. The bread was cut thin, spread with some stiffish red jam, stuck together in sandwiches and cut into squares or triangles. Next, the little sandwiches were dipped into an inexpensive batter, fried golden brown and eaten very hot. It was amusing to watch the girls while they looked on at this performance. The jam sandwiches pleased them to begin with, but when I dipped one into the batter they were disgusted, and said: "There now, she's spoilt it." After the frying, however, when the little fritters appeared, crisp and inviting, they cried: "Why, she's turned it into fried fish."

The day when I received my first earnings was never to be forgotten. Alys Pearsall Smith sent me a cheque for 15s. and it was such a wonderful thing to have really earned some money that I could hardly believe it.

On the whole, going about London by myself, I never met anything but kindness and consideration. Sometimes, coming back from a late class, I would fall asleep in the train and then some friendly workman would wake me up: "Now, missie, don't you go past where you want to get out." Sometimes I had gone past it. Those days were often hard, especially when I was taking children's classes in various parts of London. We had to put in a considerable number of hours at this work, in order to qualify for the diploma. Sometimes it was not very easy to find the

school where I was expected. Also the distances were great. One day, I remember having to teach at Kensal Green in the morning, at Tottenham Court Road in the afternoon, and at Canning Town in the evening. I always liked teaching, but the circumstances were often difficult in the schools of those days; bad lighting, poor gas pressure, battered saucepans, cracked pie dishes and so forth. The Tottenham Court Road school was unbelievably dirty; the gas stove was so coated with grease and grime that when I put a saucepan on it, there was practically no sound; it was as though I had put it down upon a piece of felt. For these lessons, we never went more than once to the same school; the whole object was for us to gain experience, which we certainly did. But it was very tiring. One day I was crossing Vincent Square, and I felt absolutely done. My back ached and the pain made me feel sick and giddy. Not being able to walk properly, I held on to the railings and wondered how I could possibly get to our house in Westminster. Suddenly I saw a young man coming towards me, and felt very thankful, for I could ask him to get me a cab. But when he came up fairly close to me, he looked startled and walked quickly away. I realised he thought I was drunk, and this seemed the last straw and very hard to bear. I managed somehow to get as far as a friend's house in Horseferry Road, and she got a cab and took me home. But things weren't often as bad as that, and all my life I have been grateful for those days, which were chequered with light and shade, but grand experience; what I learnt then has helped me all through life.

I settled down to work steadily for the High Class Cookery Diploma; the work was varied and I was under a very kind teacher, but I found some of the fancy dishes I was taught to do, for ball suppers and so forth, rather too finicky, in fact a waste of time, so much attention being paid to the appearance, and not enough to the taste of the food. It was very wearisome to bone larks with a small penknife, and anyhow it seemed a bad idea to eat larks instead of keeping them for their song. Another very finicking job was to make little savouries to look like miniature playing cards. We had to coat them with white chaudfroid sauce

and then decorate them with clubs, spades, hearts and diamonds, we glazed them with a thin layer of clear aspic. All this took a the piecesbeing cut from truffles or red pimentos, and lastly ridiculously long time and we realised that the things would be gobbled up and hardly noticed, when they appeared at a ball supper.

The demonstrations we had to take in the High Class kitchen were interesting and also exciting, because there was much more risk of coming a cropper than there had been with the plain cookery. I once got into great trouble with a cake, a sort of sponge which was to be iced later in the lesson. It rose beautifully and I felt pleased, but it went on rising out of all reason, overflowed its tin and streamed on to the oven shelf, starting to burn all over the place. I suddenly realised what I had done! I had used double the proper amount of sugar. We cleared up the mess somehow, and a kind colleague hastily made another cake behind the scenes, which was duly baked in time to be iced by the end of the lesson, but I felt quite weak after it. Another time I was making a lemon jelly—rather a big pot full—and was just carrying it to the jelly stand to run clear, when the girl who was helping me suddenly collided with me. I don't think either of us was in fault, it just happened. Luckily we always wore a thick linen cloth fastened round us just below the waist to save our aprons, but all the same the flood of hot jelly soaked through everything in a few minutes and scalded me. It was near the end of the lesson, and I don't think anybody noticed. But I was very glad to get some stuff from the first-aid box and deal with the blisters on my hip. I got on better with trussing and boning chickens. The ideal thing was to get a chicken boned in seven minutes. I don't think I ever quite accomplished this, but I was fairly quick. Another tricky job was to empty a fowl of its inside, swiftly and dexterously, before the public. This, too, came easier with practice. I now sat for my High Class Diploma, and had a friendly and not over critical chef watching me doing the practical work. The three dishes I had to cook, from memory of course, were Fillets of Sole à l'Orly, little beef cutlets with a Bearnaise sauce, and a Charlotte Russe.

Now that I was qualified I wanted to find a non-resident post in London so that I could go on living with my aunt, who was a perfect companion, and who would otherwise have been alone. For a while I worked, on a sort of mutual basis, with a Miss Cole, who had a small cookery school near Westbourne Grove. I took some children's practice classes for her, and sometimes a demonstration for adults, and in return she let me take pupils of my own and teach them on her premises. I had some very interesting Jewish pupils there, clever girls, with a real instinct for cooking. They told me many things about their rules of diet, and also taught me some of their own excellent dishes, while I was supposed to be teaching them.

That summer was very hot, and I used to long for the sea. My brother Willie was then a curate at Gateshead-on-Tyne, so one day I planned a trip to see him, taking a steamer from London Docks to Newcastle. I went second class, so the voyage was quite inexpensive, and I carried my own food, so only needed to buy cups of tea. The run took about thirty hours, I think. I remember how beautiful Bamborough Castle and Dunstanborough Castle looked from the sea, and how interesting it was to pass Holy Island, and the Farne Islands and remember Grace Darling. Willie was delighted to see me, and we enjoyed our little holiday together. He had time to take me to Hexham Abbey and to Casters on the Roman Wall, and later he saw me off on the return journey. Those two good doses of sea air did me as much good as a week's holiday inland. Another time I took a steamer from London to Dundee and stayed a couple of days with friends at St. Andrews.

I had not yet heard of a definite post, and I wanted to have further training in high class cookery; but in the meantime, to gain practice in teaching, I took some evening classes, one of which was at a Catholic Girls' Club in Canning Town. I had an Irish friend with me who was a great help, and pleasant company on the long journey there and back. We had to go by the Underground to Mark Lane and then walk to Fenchurch Street Station. The club was in the Barking Road and was run by a very cheery, competent middle-aged Irish priest. When I introduced my

helper, Miss O'Reilly, he was delighted at the sound of her name, and said: "Ah, we're all Eyetalians here, those that's not from Derry is from Kerry." It was rather a noisy sort of club with table games, piano playing and so forth, all going on simultaneously in a large hall. The stove, table and benches for the cookery class were arranged in one corner. But the Father, I have forgotten his name, had a powerful voice, and he managed to keep some sort of order. Unfortunately, he was soon moved elsewhere and his successor, a certain Father O'Flynn, was a very different type, gentle, unassuming, young and rather dreamy. The first evening he was in charge I could not teach my class properly for the din, so at last I came up to him and said: "Father, will you speak to the young ladies, they are making so much noise, I can't hear myself speak." Father O'Flynn looked at me thoughtfully, and said: "Can ye not indeed," and did nothing whatever about it. Next week the room was just a little quieter, but still I had trouble with my small class. They had started to be noisy and talkative and it seemed difficult to stop them. One day I had an idea. We usually sold the things we had cooked at cost price to any members of the class who wanted to buy them. But I suggested that the following week, if they behaved themselves—and only if they behaved themselves—I should not sell anything, but we would sit down and have a little supper party together at the end of the class. They were delighted, and next week the whole class behaved as well as possible. We tidied up the tables and dished out the food, and sat down together. Everybody's manners were wonderful, saying "Please" and "Thank you," and passing the salt and handing the plates; nothing could have been better. You would hardly have thought they were the same girls. Suddenly, a young voice said with real enthusiasm: "Ain't it just lovely when we're all behaving ourselves." After that supper party the class went really well until the end of the course, which was only a short one.

As I had still not heard of a satisfactory post I decided to take a training in laundry work, so as to be able to teach both subjects. For this I went to the Battersea Polytechnic, a new building of which the London County Council was very proud. It was a

pleasant place to work in, roomy and airy, standing in a good-sized garden. We had an excellent library, where we could sit and study, and a good canteen. There was also a chemical laboratory for testing the different chemicals that entered into the composition of cleaning agents, and here I could be guaranteed to make a complete fool of myself. I never seemed able to make the tests with sufficient accuracy and delicacy.

The laundry work was pretty tiring and of course almost everything was done by hand. I found that wet sheets in a tub were extraordinarily heavy to haul about, and ironing large table cloths was also very tiring. For this the irons had to be large and heavy and very hot, and yet they seemed to cool quickly as they went over the steaming folds of thick linen damask. One day I lifted up the iron to hold it near my cheek and judge of its heat, when my wrist gave, and though the iron did not touch my face it burnt my forearm a little. That did not seem to matter much, but it so happened that next day I had a lot of washing to do and the hot water took the skin off the blister. Again I did not attach much importance to that, though of course it was a little sore. But the climax was on the third day when I was dealing with turpentine and borax for cold water starching, and I spilt some turpentine on to the sore place. It stung so that I fairly danced round the laundry.

But sometimes I had amusing experiences. Once, in the early afternoon of a warm summer day I was in a tram which was almost empty, except for one man sitting sleepily in the far corner. I sat next to the entrance and was reading a book. I had no gloves on and I held out my left hand with the proper amount of coppers in it and went on reading my book without raising my eyes. I felt the conductor take the coppers, and then I suddenly felt him slip a ring on to my third finger and hold it there. I looked at him in amazement. "What's that for?" I asked. He slowly drew the ring off again, and gave me my ticket. "I wanted to see how it would look on someone's hand," he said; "I'm going to be married tomorrow." When he had put the ring back into his purse, he took out another ring, larger and more worn. "This here was my first wife's," he said, "remarkable good

woman she was," and then he put it also back into his purse. He was a middle-aged man with a kindly face, and I expect when he saw my ungloved left hand, the temptation to see the ring on it was irresistible. Nothing remained for me but to wish him joy when I got out of the tram.

About this time my aunt decided to give up the Grosvenor Road house, which was really larger than she needed, now that Aunt Ela was no longer with us. She took a small second-floor flat in St. Stephen's Mansions, just off Smith Square. These flats had just been built and the position suited her, for it was handy to Westminster Abbey, where we often went on Sunday mornings, and also to the district where she did most of her work. All that neighbourhood is completely changed now, and greatly for the better. The rooms were very small in the little flat, but we managed to make them pretty. Aunt Rosamond sold most of her furniture, and we only kept what we specially liked. It was amusing to go buying small chairs and odds and ends at junk shops in Vauxhall Bridge Road. I remember buying a very useful little writing-table made of some lightweight wood painted black and the top covered with dark imitation leather. It had five drawers, one large and four small, and these were provided with keys. The whole outfit cost 6s. 6d.

Looking back on that little flat I think it had a good deal of charm, and it was pleasant to be the first occupants, with everything clean, and to be able to paint and paper as we wished. My aunt's bedroom had pale grey walls and green chintz, and we hung up some of her water-colours. Our little drawing-room was deep cream with brown hangings. It had a wide window and a tiny balcony. The next room was my bed-sitting-room. I chose soft rosy red for the walls, and all the furniture was dark, mostly rather slenderly made. I got a beautiful Morris cretonne (William Morris was much in fashion at that time) in soft shades of red to cover the furniture. A friend of ours made a delightful decoration around the cornice with couplets from a poem on Friendship by Thomas Tusser. The heavy black-letter printing on parchment-coloured paper was very effective, and we soon found reasons for putting "wise saws" or "pious instances" on various pieces

of furniture to which they were applicable. The bookshelves had Bacon's "Reading maketh a full man," and Ruskin's "There is bread, sweet as honey, in a good book." I kept most of my clothes, except those which had to be hung up, in a black wooden box mounted on a stand, and when I found that both friends and relatives took loan of my things without asking, I wrote in white on the box a quotation from the XXXVIIIth Article:—"Goods of Christians are not common . . . as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast." We had a piano in this room, and one of our oldest friends, Augusta Strode, who had been a pupil of Frau Schumann, used to be very kind in playing to us, and altogether it was much more used as a sitting-room than as a bedroom. My bed was only two feet wide, made of narrow, springy wooden slats on copper wire. It became a most presentable divan by day and was quite comfortable by night. In spite of its lightness (it can be carried in one hand) it is extremely strong and is still in occasional use at Lacock Abbey.

After some months I decided to keep this bed altogether as a divan for day-time use, so we bought a hammock with what were called Ashantee supports. These could be fixed firmly on the floor of the room, and the hammock was slung between them. Of course, during the day the whole thing was taken down and stored in the bathroom. There were some drawbacks to the hammock. For one thing, as there was no mattress we had to supply its place with a thick folded rug, and make sure there were as many blankets below one as on top. Further, in spite of stretchers, it was never possible to lie quite flat in a hammock, there was always a tendency to sag towards the centre. On the other hand, it was a luxury to be able to swing oneself gently to sleep, in a room already warmed by the fire beside which we had been sitting; and it only let me down once.

Our daily maid, one Susan Morley, was a typical Cockney, and proved a constant entertainment. I can see her now, a squat little woman, very plain, but bubbling with vitality. I began teaching her to cook, for she did not know much about it. For a few days she did what I asked her, and then said: "I don't hold with making all this fuss about food, I don't think its right." So

we had a talk on the ethics of the matter, and I told her that if there was anything wrong about the way we lived, the responsibility was mine and not hers, but that when she was in her own house she could do as she thought best, but meanwhile I wanted her to do what I asked her. She agreed and after a few weeks said to me: "I've got to like messing about with the food the way you tell me, and I don't get indigestion no more. I used to take such a lot of medicine, they all called me the walking doctor's shop." So the position was satisfactorily settled and Susan, who was quite a clever woman in her way, became a good and careful cook. I bought a real vanilla pod and showed her how it was used and how to dry it and put it away for future use. This highly amused her, and when I was ordering a sweet she often asked: "Have I got to put in that bootlace?" Indeed a long vanilla pod is not unlike a bootlace. By degrees, as we got to know her better, she told us something of her private affairs. It seemed that a certain young man had been interested in her, and that she was also beginning to feel interested in him, but was not sure if he was up to her social level. Her mother then said to her: "You can stoop, Susan, its easy to stoop, but it don't follow you pick anything up." So after a time Susan decided to break off the friendship. "But," she added, "I kept all what he give me." We were shocked: "Oh Susan, how could you, you should have given him back his presents." "Not me," she said, "they was more worth than what he was."

It was a grief to me when St. James's Hall was sacrificed to build the Piccadilly Hotel. The place where beautiful music had been played for so many years and which was one of the finest halls, acoustically, in Europe, was, surely, in a sense, consecrated, and its destruction did not seem lawful. Aunt Rosamond and I heard many artists there; the old Joachim Quartet with Ries, Strauss and Piatti more times than I can number. It used to be a great pleasure to come early and join the queue for a place in the orchestra seats, especially to hear and watch a solo pianist. I was once in the orchestra seats quite close to the platform when Grieg was giving a recital. I remember his slight figure and unobtrusive entrance, his black velvet coat, and his very beautiful

white hair. The audience was most appreciative, full of enthusiasm for his playing. As a last encore he played *Hochzeit Auf Dem Trollhaugen*, which we all heard for the first time: it had not yet been published.

There was charming Ilona Eibenschutz, whom we loved both for her playing and for her appearance. When she entered the hall or bent over her piano she was inimitably graceful and she chose dresses which suited admirably her slender figure and small head, with its crown of dark hair. Another artist of very different type was Miss Marie Fillunger. She was giving a series of recitals of Schubert's Lieder, and we went to the first. A short, rather square woman came on to the platform. She had absolutely no pretensions to beauty and made no attempt to improve upon nature. Nor was there in her smile or expression of face anything specially attractive. She wore a look of quiet confidence; that was all. But when she began to sing, a new world opened to us. In the songs we already knew, she showed us something we had never realised before, and to hear those that were unfamiliar to us was to travel into a wonderful unknown country. Next day I bought three volumes of Schubert's Lieder straight away. After this, we did not miss one of her recitals and our pleasure was the same every time.

Another artist who was a great joy to us was Mr. Plunket Greene, with his faithful and sympathetic accompanist, Mr. Liddell. I think in one of their first concerts they gave Villiers Stanford's setting of Tennyson's "Maud." The dramatic character of these songs and their exquisite accompaniments made the hearing of them an unforgettable experience. Later on I heard Mr. Plunket Greene sing those Irish songs which were a speciality of his own. Many of them I have never found in any collection, and where he got them from I know not. All I know is that nobody who had heard them could ever forget them. When he sang he could picture a whole scene for us. We would be on the edge of tears or maybe over the edge of laughter. He could get more words into one breath than any man alive as, for instance, in "Quick we have but a second," and he could wring our hearts and make us realise what starvation meant in "The praties are

small over here, over here." His Irish intonation would sometimes show itself unconsciously where he did not intend to use it. I have heard him sing Schubert's "Abschied" with a definite brogue but with excellent effect, and the horse galloped at top speed. His baritone voice was not powerful, but it had great flexibility, and he had a unique power of conveying a dramatic situation.

Aunt Rosamond and I constantly attended the classical Popular Concerts which were given every Saturday at 3 p.m. in St. James's Hall. At about 4.15 p.m., if it so happened that this coincided with the playing of a soft passage of music, one could hear the bell of the muffin man in the street outside. This bell was only heard during a brief period as the man passed on his way, and I have never heard that anyone resented it.

That year both my eldest sister, Constance, and my brother, Willie, became engaged. Constance's wedding took place in early January from the Queen Anne house in Dumfries, but we were all living in our country home of Speddoch. As I was now a qualified cookery teacher, mother wanted me to help with the wedding preparations, and we were all very busy together, old Jane, my mother, my sister Mary, and I. I had to ice the wedding cake and all went pretty well until the time came to put the white sugar decorations on the top. I had the proper forcing bags and pipes, but I found the job extremely difficult. My wrist ached and the sticky stuff would not come through the pipes, although drops of syrup fell on to the cake, and had to be wiped off. Afterwards I found out what the trouble had been. The icing was not beaten properly and had not nearly enough air in it, which made it too dense and heavy. We spent a long evening sitting in the old kitchen, my mother holding a candle near me while I squeezed and wrung the bag. It was not for many years after this that we had any electric light in that house, and I often wonder how we got through the amount of work that we did for that wedding, especially as it was the middle of winter. Finally the cake was finished and duly cut on the wedding day. It got some compliments, one old gentleman saying it was the "chastest" cake he ever saw.

Besides the cake, all the eatables and decorations, as well as all

the members of the family, had to be conveyed by horse and carriage on the morning of the wedding day from our old country home at Speddoch ten miles into the town of Dumfries, for the reception was held in the Queen Anne house. The wedding ceremony took place in the Episcopal Church, commonly called the Church of England. There were six bridesmaids, of whom I was one, and we wore dresses of soft blue cloth trimmed with fur, which were pretty and delightfully warm. We had black velvet beefeater hats with fur on them, and wore gold brooches which the bridegroom gave us. All went well and happily, and I was highly delighted by a compliment from an old friend, who told me I had conducted myself like a bridesmaid and a sister, a mother and wife! Finally the couple went off in a sharp snowstorm for their wedding tour.

More and more I hoped I might get a post where I need only teach cooking, and which would not involve laundry work. And so it fell out. A friend told me that a cookery teacher—non-resident—would shortly be needed at the Roan Girls' School in Greenwich, so I decided to try for that; and as I was accepted I took no further training at Battersea. The interview I had with the headmistress was very satisfactory. She was the daughter of an Aberdeen doctor, and an M.A. I think she was glad I was half Scotch, as she evidently did not yet feel quite at home at Greenwich. She had only been there one term when we met. My next interview, with the Governors of the School, was rather amusing. It took place at 7.30 in the evening. The Governors, ten men and one lady, were in committee when I arrived, and I was instructed to sit upon the staircase outside the door until they were ready to see me. I waited rather a long time, but I didn't feel nervous. When I came in they all looked rather funny; the lady had long grey ringlets each side of her face, most of the men were in a sort of evening dress with a large expanse of shirt front, and several had coloured flowers in their buttonholes. They asked a number of questions, some sensible, some stupid, and in the end I gathered they were satisfied. Next week the headmistress asked me to come down to the school, lunch with her, and have a look round to get to know my way about the place.

I started work there early in January. It took an hour to get from Westminster to Greenwich; fortunately the same tram went all the way from Westminster Bridge. The school was rather an inconvenient building, with two semi-basement kitchens side by side. One was for preparing the school dinners, and the other for me to hold my classes. It was really a sort of double job, as I had to order what was needed for school dinners as well as arrange for the children's cookery lessons. Fortunately the old porter and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Shade, were kindly people, and they realised that it was difficult for me to pick up this complicated job, so they helped me as much as they could, and told me what had usually been done in the past. What made the housekeeping rather difficult was that we did not know on any day how many pupils would want dinner until the girls actually arrived at 9 o'clock. We always had to leave an elastic order with the tradesmen which was adjusted each morning. There was no telephone, but the shops were near, and either the housekeeper could run in with a message, or I would if I had time before my class. We had no single room large enough to seat everybody, so we had to serve a simultaneous meal in two rooms, one on the ground floor and one above. Even this was not quite enough, so we had to serve a third dinner in the ground floor room as soon as it was free. Besides this, the mistresses ate in a small dining-room of their own, so that actually we had to serve dinner four times.

At that date I imagine there were few educated girls who took up cookery teaching, at any rate I found that the other mistresses on the staff of the school rather despised me; it may have been because I wore a cap and apron, but they generally called me "the cook" and spoke to me rather roughly. One day one of my young pupils—they varied in age from eleven to about fifteen—came to the class with her hair very untidy, so I lent her my comb and sent her to put it right. I forgot to ask her for it after the lesson, and later in the day she came past the kitchen door, and threw it on to the table, saying: "That's the cook's comb." One day, when he brought the morning supply of fish, the fishmonger put a bloater down besides the rest, and when I said I had not ordered any dried fish, he replied: "I brought that as a present

for yourself, Miss," picked it up, and went away looking rather annoyed. The kind housekeeper also seemed to think I came from a very humble background. Very likely I was more plainly dressed than the other mistresses. Anyway, one day, after we had served stewed steak for dinner, there was a good deal of the gravy left, and she handed me a big jug of it when I was getting ready to leave work, and said: "There, you take that, I'll be bound you don't get much at home." Another time she presented me with a brown felt hat which she said she no longer required. It was wrapped up in a sheet of *The Sporting Times*, but was perfectly clean. I wore it for a time to please her, because she was always very kind to me, especially in those first difficult days when I used to feel confused by all the questions that were asked me, and all the different things I was supposed to know. Sometimes I locked myself up into the larder for a few minutes just to have time to think. I was not very fit that year, either, which made the job more difficult. Finally, by the doctor's advice, I asked to be allowed to start my holidays at mid-term instead of at the end of July, and said I would pay for a competent teacher to take my place for those five or six weeks. This was agreed to, and a teacher whom I had coached in my training days came to the Roan School and carried on everything extremely well for the rest of the term.

This piece of extra holiday made it possible for me to be at my brother's wedding in Shropshire, which would otherwise have been difficult. After that we all went up together to Gairloch in Ross-shire and gave ourselves up largely to sea fishing. We were a big party, in a house called "Carn Dearg," and we had a great time catching haddock and conger. When the weather was too bad to go fishing we set lobster pots. Never a lobster did we catch, but we got plenty of crabs in the pots. Once it happened that we had no meat or fish in the house, so we all of us lived for two days entirely on crabs, proving conclusively that crabs must be wholesome. But it took a tremendous time boiling them all, cracking their shells and dishing them up. My sister and her husband, my brother and his wife, all came up and joined us there. Besides proving that crabs must be wholesome, we estab-

lished the fact that Highland cows must have fine digestions. One day we had prepared a long line for catching conger. I think there were about sixty hooks on it, all carefully baited with mussels. We left it lying stretched out on the turf. When we came in the early evening to take the line into the boat and set it for the night, we found it had been dragged all over the place, all the mussels bitten off and most of the hooks. There were some young cattle standing near it which we had not noticed before. We called our boatman and asked if the cattle could possibly have eaten the hooks. He said these cattle had just come over from Skye and they would eat anything. I have seen Irish cattle eat bathing dresses and chew feathers and bones, but surely fish-hooks were impossible. We were afraid the creatures would suffer very much, and perhaps die, but the boatman assured us they would take no harm; nor did they.

There was a very friendly old white-bearded minister, Mr. McCulloch, living near us who was a good Gaelic scholar, so I asked him if he would teach me. He agreed at once and taught me one or two little sentences, and then said I must come up to the manse where he had books. It was all very difficult and rather funny. He called in his housekeeper and made her read aloud to me. He chose the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John, difficult enough in English, let alone in Gaelic. But it sounded pretty when she read it, and I tried hard to follow the sounds, though I could not understand the words. Next, he lent me a long epic poem about the Macleods and I took that home to work at it with a dictionary. It was full of puzzles; one verse about the Macleods rising said that the Macleods would rise "like bristles upon an adder." An adder having no bristles I could not make sense of it. But next day when I brought it to him he thoughtfully said: "Now, there are no bristles upon an adder, but if there would be bristles upon an adder, that is just how the Macleods would rise." So that was the explanation! Another day I found something in a poem about a person who was like a sapling or a branch or something of that kind—I couldn't make out what. Mr. McCulloch smiled gently, and said: "Well, it is just a term of endearment, such as the like of you would apply to a young man."

We had a very delightful friend in the West Highlands, Miss Constance Astley, always called Connie, who lived at Arisaig just above Loch Na-nuamh, forty miles from Fort William. We were generally a party of five or six at Arisaig and were exceedingly happy there. From any room in the house the views were lovely. We looked over mountains and sea lochs, the Roshven Range, Rum and Eigg, Skye and the Coolins. Every morning we used to hear Miss Astley playing Bach and Glück to us on the organ in the hall, and after breakfast we were practically out of doors all day, unless the weather was very bad. We ate our porridge on the terrace outside the dining-room and came indoors for the rest of an abundant breakfast. We often went out in boats. There was the black gig and the brown gig, and sometimes we rowed and sometimes we sailed. Miss Astley would steer and call directions in Gaelic to the boatman. I remember old Captain McKechnie who used to command the *Claymore*, a cargo and passenger steamer that plied from Glasgow to Stornoway, telling us once that there was no better hand in a small boat, in all the West Highlands, than Miss Astley. I believe she and her sister used to organise sailing races, which must have been no easy matter among the small islands and the currents. I was never allowed to do anything while we were sailing; I can chiefly remember lying at the bottom of the boat, and letting the boom swing over my head. But we went through some lovely places, especially when it was low tide, and we were rowing gently between the little islands. I remember one day when I think the tide must have been exceptionally low. The water was as clear as glass and below us was a perfect flower garden, sea plants of every shape and colour, delicate little crimson fronds, brilliant green ribbons, brown stems carrying hollow fruits the shape of olives, yellow streamers with little blisters of jelly on them, all growing among rocks to which sea anemones were clinging, and beneath everything the lovely pale golden sand. All these growths waved gently as our boat passed over them, and sometimes we saw the dart of little fishes, tiny blue and silver mackerel, or perhaps just little homely grey cuddies.

We generally bathed just below the house. There was a steep

path down from the terrace that led through the garden, where we used to pick May Duke cherries off the wall as we went by, and so down and down till we reached the sea. There was a big cave where we undressed, and then a long stretch of wood planking which took us over the shingle to a little spring-board where we could dive straight into the deep water. It was an ideal spot and we always had it entirely to ourselves. Miss Astley swam as well as she did everything else, and she was much better than I was when it came to climbing up the hill again after the bathe.

The evenings, too, were a joy; very often one of her musical friends, of whom she had many, played to us on the piano and sometimes after our coffee, which was particularly good, we would stroll out on to the terrace, and sing to the guitar. Miss Astley played one and so did I. We would have a last look at the Coolins and then to bed. We drove too, in a wagonette with two horses, and sometimes Miss Astley let me drive. One of her favourite tricks, when she was not driving herself, was to vault out of the back of the wagonette while it was on the move. She just rested her hand on the back rail of the carriage and the next moment she was standing on the road. Old Father Angus, the Arisaig village priest, was with us once when she did this, and he was so startled, he cried: "God bless my soul, she's out!" She had great sympathy with young people and many a happy holiday she gave to tired workers. I remember a charming story about her. She was staying in Edinburgh, where she had many friends, and among them a girl of twenty-four, one Elsa, a highly gifted, sensitive creature and a good pianist. The family had very narrow means so this girl felt she should accept a resident teaching post in Sheffield, at the High School there. But she hated the idea of leaving home. Miss Astley encouraged her and cheered her up as much as she could, but the girl felt very despondent and even a little afraid when the day came to leave Edinburgh. She reached Sheffield, took a cab, and went to the lodging where she had arranged to live. The landlady met her in the hall and then opened the door of the sitting-room. There was a bright fire, tea laid on the table, and flowers. Also, by the fire, was quietly sitting Miss Astley, who had come to Sheffield the

day before, secured a room for herself in an hotel, seen Elsa's landlady, and arranged everything so that there should be a welcome. She stayed in Sheffield for a week until the girl was thoroughly adjusted to her job and her surroundings. Miss Astley's friends used to speak of her "devoted pilgrimages," of which there were many besides the one on behalf of Elsa.

CHAPTER FIVE

Living at Lacock Abbey with Uncle Charles and Aunt Rosamond – Visits to Norway and Denmark – French and Italian holidays – Trip by coasting Steamers – Visit to Ireland

WHILE we were staying at Carn Dearg, my Aunt Rosamond received a letter from her bachelor brother, Charles Talbot, asking her to give up her home in Westminster and come and live with him. He had never been a strong man, and he was now beginning to feel less strong than formerly, and would like to have her with him. I little thought, when the letter arrived, how greatly it would affect the whole course of my life. It was, of course, a wrench for her to leave her flat; and still more to give up the useful work she was doing in Westminster, but she never doubted that she ought to agree to her brother's wish. This was the beginning of changes for all of us. She promised to go to him as soon as she could wind up various London commitments. It was decided that I should remain in the flat, and go on with my work at Greenwich, and a girl friend who was studying at the Slade School would stay with me. My sister Mary also planned to come for a time, and the faithful Susan Morley would continue to work for us every day. I determined to come down to Lacock for weekends, that is to say from Saturday morning to Sunday evening, as often as I could, for Aunt Rosamond and I did not want to be separated more than could be helped.

The only servants then in the Abbey were two good old sisters, one a widow and one a spinster, who had worked for my uncle during the many years, as cook and housemaid, with occasional help as needed. There was also a coachman, who was a true friend of the family, besides a gardener and a boy. All these went on faithfully with their work, and welcomed Aunt Rosamond's

coming. Uncle Charles, though he had become almost a recluse, never resented my coming to Lacock so often; he just took it as a matter of course, and I think on the whole he liked it. For many years he had seemed to prefer a quiet and retired life, mainly interesting himself in archaeology, and he often wrote articles for archaeological magazines. He occasionally went to meetings and lectures on medieval architecture, when he would sometimes read a paper himself. He would also go on architectural and archaeological expeditions, sometimes staying away for several days. Very occasionally he had come to London to spend a few days with us there, but he was generally glad to get home again. He had never been fond of society, and never felt able to entertain. I realise now that Aunt Rosamond must have found the change to Lacock rather difficult at first. Life there was very quiet and most unlike the life she had made for herself in London, where I and my friends used to come rushing in to the Westminster flat at all hours without notice, and she always welcomed them, and was interested in what they were saying or doing. By degrees, however, she now began to ask her friends from London to come and stay at Lacock so that they should enjoy the spaciousness and beauty of the Abbey. As long as there was only one visitor at a time, and the visit was not too long, my uncle did not find it tiring, and, in fact, to a certain extent, he enjoyed the variety, and he was always very kind to me when I came down. It amused him very much that I had been presented at Court, which neither my aunt nor my mother had been. Both my sister Mary and I wanted to be presented. I think this was from some sort of feeling of admiration for the British type of constitutional monarchy, and also from personal loyalty to Queen Victoria. I had a vague idea, too, that if ever I took a post outside the British Isles, the fact of having been received at the British Court would be an advantage. I had earned a certain amount of money from the Greenwich post, and our cousins helped us over the presentation arrangements. Mary was presented by our cousin, Lady Hampson, and I by her sister, Mrs. Stewart Murray. After he knew this, my uncle made a practice of saying to visitors: "My niece is a Greenwich cook, who has been presented at Court."

He used to sit in his study a good deal, writing or reading; he wrote his articles slowly, correcting them with great care and accuracy. He was rather indifferent about clothes, but very neat and tidy with his papers. He took several short walks every day, little walks of twenty minutes or so round the shrubberies or into the village. As a young man he kept a dog for a short time, but found he was not strong enough to give the creature the exercise it needed, so, as he was always kind to animals, he passed it on to a friend who could take it for longer walks. But he shared the family predilection for cats. My mother gave Aunt Rosamond a Persian cat when she went to Lacock, and he took a great interest in this creature and the numerous families she produced. As the cat was a real pleasure to my aunt (we had never thought it right to keep one in our little flat) I felt very glad that he also liked them. He was a poor sleeper, though he always went to bed rather early, and slept best late in the morning. He often did not come to breakfast until 11.30 or later. Aunt Rosamond took her own at the usual time, and something was kept hot for him. But if he had slept well, he would sometimes come along unexpectedly early.

He could be very amusing, even in describing some of the features of the house. One day a neighbour came to see us, bringing her young daughter-in-law, who much admired the eighteenth-century pseudo-Gothic arch near the front entrance. "Yes," said my uncle rather sadly, "I suppose you would admire it—elegant but corrupt." This reply served as a joke in the young lady's family for a long time to come. Once, too, when I had been trying to bicycle and had constantly fallen into the bushes beside the drive, I came in and said: "I think I will repose on my laurels." To which he replied: "Last time I looked at you, you appeared to be reposing on mine." He generally took a slight lunch and had his principal meal in the evening. He always had rather light food for lunch, minced veal or fish or something of that kind, especially made for him, but Aunt Rosamond and I usually had something else, for there were quite a number of ordinary dishes which he was rather afraid to eat in case they disagreed with him. However, he generally came round to our end of the table to

satisfy his curiosity about what we were having. One day he came in, looked at the dish that had been cooked for him, and then came to my end as I lifted the cover: "What have you before you?" he gravely asked. Quite untruthfully I replied: "Devilled pork," just to see what he would say. "Do you propose to eat that?" he asked. "Yes," I said. He returned to his end of the table and quietly remarked: "I trust you will not rush violently down a steep place into the sea!" He was very good fun, in his quiet way, but occasionally his attitude was uncommonly disconcerting.

One afternoon my aunt had a meeting of ladies to discuss some nursing scheme. There was one lady present whom we did not know very well, or like very much, as it happened. She had a rather gushing and overwhelming manner, but she had driven a long way, and Aunt Rosamond felt it would be only fair to ask her to stay to tea with us. At tea she addressed herself mainly to my uncle in an effusive manner, which he greatly disliked, and said: "Next time I come to Lacock, Mr. Talbot, you must show me round the cloisters yourself." My uncle looked at her calmly, and replied: "Next time you come here, Mrs. So and So, I propose to go to Weston-super-Mare," and went on drinking his tea. Aunt Rosamond was not in the room, and I just sat there red in the face. One could not say anything to soften such a remark. After a little while the lady rose to leave and I went meekly down to the front door with her. At other times he would score neatly over me. I remember once he was very dilatory about some household matter which we had to decide. I waited for days and could not get a definite answer from him. When I tried again there were just the two of us at dinner, and a large vase of flowers stood on the table between us. After a last vain attempt to get a decision, I lost my temper completely, and said: "Well, as long as that thing's on the table, I can't see you, and that's one comfort." He quietly replied: "The accommodation is mutual." So I had to laugh, for it was quite impossible to go on feeling cross.

Aunt Rosamond, like many ladies at that period, had done a good deal of voluntary charitable work, and had worked wholeheartedly in London. In addition to her Church work she was a health visitor, and was both grieved and indignant at the bad

housing conditions she found in Westminster, doing all in her power to help the people who had to live in the poorer streets. She had a great admiration for the fine work of Octavia Hill, and, like her, was a good deal in advance of the time in which she lived. I think Aunt Rosamond, even in girlhood, must have been in advance of her times. She once told me that when she was fifteen she was walking along a corridor at the Abbey, and saw a young housemaid sweeping. It immediately came into her mind that this girl, whose circumstances were so different from her own, was just the same age as herself, and she was struck by the contrast. I think she always wanted, as far as possible, to give people equality of opportunity. During her work in London, she was at times very sad, and even discouraged. This was inevitable, but she found artistic relief in her painting. She was a true artist and not just a person who went sketching. Fortunately, when she and her sisters were girls, it was possible to give a great deal of time to a favourite subject, whether painting, music, or anything else. There were none of the multifarious things which nowadays claim a girl's time and attention. So my mother and her sisters used to draw and paint for hours undisturbed, and all their outings and expeditions were planned with a view to sketching. The result of this was that they all, especially Aunt Rosamond, reached a very high standard of work.

Her painting continued to be a great happiness to her after she settled with my uncle at Lacock, though, of course, there were many things to think of in the house, and changes to be made. As more rooms were now in use, more staff had to be engaged, and my uncle became increasingly used to visitors coming in, either for meals or to stay. My aunt became a Guardian, and took a great interest in the nursing societies of the county. She met congenial spirits, who welcomed her co-operation and help. She started keeping poultry at the Abbey, to the great satisfaction of our good coachman, Fred Bird, who undertook the care of them, and she had the large pond cleaned out, and made some improvements in the garden. It had not been easy for her to give up her interests in London, but she was in some ways glad to be once more in her childhood's home, and to feel she could be of service there.

All the same, I felt clearly that she was to some extent lonely and that I ought to go and live with her. So I resigned my teaching post at Greenwich, and was very glad indeed when they appointed an excellent teacher whom I had known for years. We planned that I should join Aunt Rosamond at Lacock in September, and meantime my sister Mary and I had a very pleasant project in view. We had a warm invitation from Fredrike Betzmann's parents to stay in their home in Norway, and there were also two invitations to Denmark, which arose from the trip to the Faroe Isles. Jelma Olsen had written several times inviting my brother and me to stay with her in Jutland, and besides this Willie and I had been asked to stay with the Governor of the Faroes and his wife; he had retired, and they were settled at Roeskilde. I explained to both Danish friends that my brother would not be free to leave his work, but that I would like to accept their invitations, and bring my sister in his place.

We wanted to be economical, so we chose the cheapest steamer. this proved to be a Norwegian-owned one, the S.S. *Scotland*, sailing from Grangemouth via Bergen to Oslo (which was then called Christiania). She was an untidy sort of craft and none too clean. My sister and I shared a cabin with an old Norwegian lady who was a bad sailor and very nervous; so much so that she insisted on sending for her son, who had been accommodated in another part of the ship. She persuaded him to sit by her bunk throughout the voyage and hold her hand, and from time to time bring her strangely unsuitable—as it seemed to us—articles of food. He was a quiet enough young man, but Mary and I would have been glad to do without him. However, mother and son departed next morning at Bergen, and we began to make acquaintance with our fellow passengers, who were nearly all Norwegians.

The voyage passed pleasantly until we approached the southern extremity of Norway and got into a very heavy swell. We were carrying a cargo of iron rails from Grangemouth and this began to shift. Every roll made matters worse, and the roar of the iron rails moving over each other was followed by a tinkling and crashing of glass and china in the steward's pantry. It was almost impossible to keep one's feet on deck, but fortunately the weather

was fine and there was little wind. At last we turned the corner and got into Christiania Fjord. It was early on Sunday morning, the sides of the fjord were gay with little villas, each with its garden and private landing stage, and on each roof a flag fluttered in the breeze. The whole scene was very bright and cheerful and we were most thankful to be in safety. We soon found, however, that we were an object of derision to other craft. Everything that passed us made some sort of ironical salute on her siren. We must have looked like a drunken charwoman, steaming lop-sided up the long fjord all Sunday; even the smallest rowboats shouted something at us as they went by.

At the head of the fjord, Fredrike was on the quay to meet us, with her father, mother, sister and youngest brother; they gave us the warmest of welcomes. They were living in a charming little country house at Nordstrand, on the south side of the fjord. Their house was full, as their eldest son had brought his American wife on a visit, and their second son, a lieutenant in the Norwegian Navy, was spending his leave at home, but they had taken a room for us in a little boarding house close by, where we had bed and breakfast, spending all the rest of the day with our friends. There was a lovely bathing place just below the house where we slept. Every morning Mary and I went down a steep little path into a big wooden-slatted hut which stretched over the water. There were always multitudes of little fishes which darted off when we made our appearance. We had a lovely swim and came back hungry to breakfast.

For nearly a month we stayed with Fredrike's family and were soon able to talk Norwegian quite fluently. It was a very happy time, going expeditions, visiting and meeting all their friends; they were very hospitable and liked to ask their friends to coffee parties in the garden. Some of our pleasantest expeditions were in rowing boats up the little inlets of the fjord, going ashore and picnicking where we liked. Looking back, it seems to me that every afternoon was fine.

Fredrike's father was a very gracious old gentleman with courtly manners. He once paid me a very pretty compliment, which I never forgot, though I didn't deserve it. We were all

sitting in the garden after one of the coffee parties, and I was talking to the naval son, when I noticed his father was sitting all by himself while the others were playing some sort of game. I said: "I think I'll just go over there and talk to your father." So I went, and after we had chatted for a while he turned to me and said: "You are kind to everyone: you are as the sunrise to the young men, and as the light of evening to the old."

Once Fredrike's parents gave a large party for some three dozen of their friends. We began with a small and select lunch to which a few privileged guests were invited. I don't remember what we had to eat, except for one thing which I found very difficult to swallow. It was a soup made of beer, slightly thickened with flour, and it was seasoned with salt and pepper and served piping hot with a large spoonful of whipped cream in the middle of each plate. I never wish to see or smell it again. After lunch, friends streamed in. From 2 p.m. onwards we were mostly in the garden, where we had plates of fruit, and from time to time trays of coffee appeared, with wonderful cakes. Mary and I met many people we had not seen before, and everybody wanted to talk and to ask questions. The time went on, but no guests left; they just went on accepting further offers of coffee and cakes until 6 o'clock and later. About 6.30 p.m. Fredrike's mother came out of the house with a smile and said: "Vaer saa god" (Be so kind), the Norwegian phrase for inviting one to table. We then streamed into the dining-room, where cold meats and salads of every description were set out. The etiquette was for everyone to take his plate of food out on to the verandah or into the drawing-room and eat it there. This meal, with the second helpings which were offered, took a good while, and after we had finished it Fredrike opened the piano and sang to us. She had a very pretty mezzo-soprano voice, and she sang in Swedish as well as Norwegian. Many of the Swedish folk songs were lovely, and her naval brother joined her in singing some duets from a book of student songs by the Swedish composer, Wennerberg. So the time passed until about 10 p.m., when Fredrike's mother again emerged from the dining-room with the words, "Vaer saa god." When we trooped in we found the sweet course, jellies, compotes and

creams, and once more we took our plates to the drawing-room or verandah while kind Fredrike continued to sing to us. Finally cups of tea were served, and a little before midnight the company dispersed. I must say that none of Fredrike's family seemed unduly exhausted next morning.

Sometimes we went short trips by train. Once a party of us, including Fredrike's father, all went together, having taken return tickets, to Christiania. When Mary saw the collector coming round at the last station before Christiania she took out our tickets, broke off the return halves and duly offered the outward halves to the collector. He looked a trifle worried and shook his head. Mary at once showed him our return halves as well. He still was not satisfied and appealed to Fredrike's father, who was reading the paper: "These ladies have destroyed their tickets." "Oh dear," said Fredrike's father, "what did you do that for, now they will make you pay again." But all the same, when we told him we were allowed in England to break our tickets, he took up our defence stoutly and said we ought not to have to pay . At last the collector fetched the stationmaster, and there were long discussions. Finally the stationmaster shrugged his shoulders and said: "Let it pass. It seems that in England the passengers are instructed to destroy their tickets."

The time went by all too quickly until we left for our second Scandinavian visit. This was to Mr. Hansen and his daughter in Denmark. Mary and I left Christiania one evening by steamer and arrived in Copenhagen next morning. The Hansens had a fine house on the Bredgade, and we were royally entertained. In fact we often needed to wear the best clothes we had. Danes are extremely social, I think, and they didn't mind our Norwegian accent, as they called it. The two languages were very much alike at that date, though they are more differentiated now.

The Danes seemed to think that all English girls must be remarkably athletic. We had only been quite a short time in Copenhagen, when Emily Hansen asked us if we would show her how to dance a quadrille on bicycles. When we confessed that neither of us could dance a quadrille on our feet, let alone on bicycles, she was much disappointed.

I remember a wonderful drive we had one evening along the Sound with Mr. Hansen and his daughter Emily, in a landau behind a pair of big brown horses. I am not sure what time it could have been, but it must have been late, for I remember a lovely sunset sky with a castle silhouetted against it, and then the moon rising and the moonlight shining on the water of a lake, and that Mr. Hansen took us into the castle by the lake, and we had dinner in solemn state, the four of us, with no one else there. I imagine the castle was being used as some sort of hotel. One day he took us to the famous Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen to eat ices and listen to music, and on another evening we went to the ballet and were lucky enough to see Adeline Genée dance Coppelia at the height of her career.

I had no idea before we came how much Copenhagen is divided by little canals between the streets. We very much admired the Exchange, with its strange tower, four dragon heads making the corners at the base and their interlaced and twisted tails tapering up to form the point of the spire. The town hall was then being built and was in fact almost finished. Mr. Hansen arranged for the architect to take Mary and me over it. We had a most interesting time, while he explained everything to us, and we admired the building very much. We had climbed up many stairs and reached a high level, when he opened a door and quite unexpectedly led us out on to the outside of the building. We found ourselves walking along a narrow path on the edge of the roof, and there was no parapet. Down below we could hear the roar of the traffic and I was afraid to look down. Mary was behind me and I looked over my shoulder, and told her to keep her eyes fixed on the sloping roof to our left, for I knew she was liable to dizziness. It was only a matter of a few yards before we reached another door to our left and re-entered the building. I feel sure that this coming out on to the roof was only done to save us a long walk up and down steps, and that the architect had not meant to frighten us. It was, no doubt, an everyday matter to him. But all the same the sudden coming out into the open air was quite a shock, and I was very glad to be under cover again.

There were fine craftsmen in Copenhagen, and we much

enjoyed seeing beautiful china and beautifully bound leather books. I remember, too, how charming the factory girls looked as they went to work in the mornings; there was a type I do not remember to have seen anywhere else. They had lovely pale gold hair in thick plaits, fair complexions with little or no colour and dark brown eyes, velvety and soft. The effect was unusual and extremely pretty.

Finally we left Copenhagen for Roeskilde on the Island of Zeeland, where our good friend Mr. Buchwaldt, formerly Amtmand of the Faroes, welcomed us. Mary, of course had never seen him, but she at once liked him very much. His wife seemed even more fragile than when I had met her six years earlier, but she was cheerful, and very happy to be in Denmark again; she had an affectionate niece living with her who was like a daughter to them both. The Amtmand was very anxious to practise his English. He was generally quite easy to understand, but sometimes I was puzzled. On our first evening we sat down to dinner, and plates of soup were placed in front of us. When I took up my spoon, he checked me, saying firmly: "You must be courteous." I stopped and waited and got rather pink, wondering what on earth I had done or left undone. Nothing happened and after a moment I took up my spoon again. Once again he stopped me, but this time with a smile, and said: "You must be courteous, the soup is very hot." Of course our English spelling and pronunciation is enough to baffle any foreigner.

The weather was very hot that summer in Denmark, and we were glad to sit about in the Amtmand's shady garden by day and in the evenings to sit in the drawing-room while he played to us. He was a good pianist and was greatly disappointed that I could not play duets with him. He sadly said: "I have here quite a quantity of four-handed music." But it had to be two-handed as far as we were concerned, and we enjoyed listening very much.

The time in Roeskilde passed quietly, the more so as the weather continued to be very hot. The Amtmand's niece sometimes took us for walks in a neighbouring forest, and we also made acquaintance with her friends. One morning at about eleven she took us to what she called an "Eggedosis" party.

Eggedosis is really a form of egg flip, but it did not appear first on the menu. As soon as the guests arrived, in spite of the heat of the weather, cups of hot chocolate were handed round with appropriate cakes. Next came sandwiches of sliced radishes, and other sandwiches spread with marmalade. Our hosts were very kind, but I don't think on such a morning anyone could have really wished for anything except a lemon squash. However, we remembered the honour of our country, and tried to eat and drink politely and gratefully. Lastly the eggedosis itself appeared in little glasses, and finally we were able to say goodbye without discourtesy, and go back to the Amtmand's house, and sit in his shady garden.

Our visit to Jelma Olsen in Jutland still lay ahead of us. We reached Randers Station to find her on the platform. She had come in a big carriage drawn by two horses, which belonged to the prioress of the "kloster" where she lived. This "kloster" was not really a convent; I think its foundation was philanthropic rather than religious, and that similar places in Germany are—or were—called "stifts." I knew that Jelma was an orphan and that she had been brought up by her guardian and his wife somewhere in Jutland. But a few months before our visit she had moved to the kloster, for what reason I never knew. She was an interesting, thoughtful girl, a year or so older than me. Usually she was very quiet, but she could at times be quite merry. I think her own family had come from Slesvig, that part of Denmark which is still called South Jutland, and which was taken from Denmark by Germany after the war of 1871. Jelma had a strong feeling of resentment about this, and wanted me to write to the English papers about it.

When we reached the kloster we found a house quite different from any of those we had yet seen, a dignified old square building, surrounded by a moat. There were four little bridges on the four sides, each leading to a door into the house. We were brought in by Jelma and introduced to the prioress, a dear old lady, who could speak a few words of English, and she made us welcome. Two or three other ladies were introduced to us, most of them elderly, though one—Froken Blache—could not have been

more than forty, and she was very vivacious. Jelma was the only really young person in the place, and I think that was partly why she wanted us so much to come and stay with her. Mary and I had a nice bedroom, plain and rather bare, but well lighted, and there was plenty of water, both hot and cold, though there were no baths indoors. The bath-house was out in the shrubbery and a great deal of previous arrangement, lighting a special fire and so forth, was necessary before one could bathe there. We did so once, but it obviously gave everybody so much trouble that we didn't like to do it again. There was rather a strict routine in the house; we had a coffee breakfast with Jelma, who had a sitting room of her own, and at midday everybody came together into the large dining-room for dinner, the prioress presiding. We were waited on by a footman called Valdemar, rather a clumsy lad, but good tempered and smiling. He wore a most impressive livery, a rose-coloured velvet coat trimmed with silver braid and breeches of the same. Before the meal, we used to go up and greet the prioress where she sat at the head of the table, and at the end of it we came up to her again, curtsied and thanked her. She used a pleasant form of grace before meat:—"*Velsing Vort hus, velsing vort bord, velsing dit folk i syd og nord, velsing os med din milde haand, gud fader son i helling aand,*" which in English is:—"Bless our house, Bless our table, Bless thy people in the North and the South, Bless us with thy Gracious Hand, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." After lunch we went off with Jelma for walks, and everything was new to us; the little villages were most attractive, the houses colour-washed in various shades of pink, pale yellow or green. Very few were white. On nearly every house was a big stork's nest, though the storks, of course, were not there in September. We should have greatly liked to see them.

We were very much impressed by the elementary schools. They were well built and well lighted, every school had some sort of simple gymnastic apparatus and the children had regular physical exercises. Also there was a fair amount of time given to music, especially to singing in chorus. During the winter, we were told, many grown-up young men and women came to evening classes at the school, so they must have been keen on learning. The

country people dressed their children very simply and sensibly. Things may, of course, be very different now, but at that time all working people wore home-knit woollen stockings and wooden shoes not unlike those worn by the Dutch. The children's stockings were very cleverly contrived; they were long and warm but had neither toes nor heels. There was just a broad band of knitting under the instep to keep the stocking in place, and then the little shoe was packed with some soft wool or, often, the fluffy tops of the cotton grass which grew everywhere. This kept little toes and heels quite warm and comfortable, and could be changed easily. Indoors both young and old wore slippers of closely plaited straw or rushes, and altogether I got the impression of great economy, and very good sense in their outfits.

The most important meal in the kloster was dinner, served at five, and we used to change our dresses for this, for it was a little more formal than the midday meal. We did not remain in the dining-room after the meat course was cleared away, but, having made our curtsies to the prioress, we returned to the drawing-room. Soon after that, Valdemar would bring in the sweet, jelly perhaps, or cooked fruit, and put a plateful before each of us wherever we might be sitting. Fortunately there were numbers of small tables. After this last course had been removed, coffee was brought in and then we settled down to reading or needle-work. Sometimes we played cards, and often Froken Blache would read aloud to us. She read us an amusing Danish comedy called "The Man who had no Time," and many folk tales also. Finally a tray of tea was brought in, and soon after we went to bed.

I wish I had kept a list of the many sayings and proverbs we heard in Denmark. Just a few stuck in my memory. Where we would say: "It is raining cats and dogs," the Danes say: "It is raining shoemakers' apprentices," which perhaps implies a rather heavier downfall. To check children who are humming and singing over their plates, they say: "The husband didn't know his wife was mad, until she sang at the table." I was amused to hear them speak of a cat as "kattepus," where we should say "pussy-cat."

I remember a Sunday during our visit to Jelma, which was unlike any other Sunday I ever spent. We drove to church in the landau behind the big horses, and attended a long service somewhat like that of the Church of Scotland. The singing was not very good. The Jutland peasants seemed to have rather thin, shrill voices. But the service was interesting, the pastor, evidently a thoroughly earnest man, preached well and the people listened attentively. The church was pretty full; one reason may have been that there were baptisms immediately after the service. The babies did not wear white robes but little silk frocks, mostly pale pink. The pastor and his wife came back to lunch with us; in fact, as in England, it was a Sunday midday dinner, followed by coffee. After we had finished the meal everybody started playing cards, and I realised the pastor and his wife would be spending the afternoon with us, as he had no further duties, having taken his Sunday School before the Morning Service. Mary looked a little disconcerted at being asked to play cards on a Sunday, for she was rather old-fashioned in some ways, but she felt it would not be polite to refuse. Next, Froken Blache played to us for a while and finally suggested we should dance. The pastor immediately asked my sister if she knew the Highland Schottische, and said it was a dance he had always wished to learn. My sister was more than astonished, but Froken Blache produced a suitable tune, and there was nothing to be done except to consent. Mary and I did an "exhibition turn" and then she took on the pastor and I took on his wife. I was delighted, of course, but I could see poor Mary was not happy. Jelma then started some Danish folk dances and we danced on until tea time, after which the pastor and his wife went home. Later in the evening Mary said to me rather sadly, "What an extraordinary Sunday!" I could only answer that I had enjoyed it very much.

The autumn days went on and finally we tore ourselves away from Denmark with real regret, and returned to England via Esberg and Harwich. We had been in Scandinavia all August and all September, and never, to our knowledge, seen one English person. Mary went back to Scotland to our mother, and I went to Lacock to stay with Aunt Rosamond and Uncle Charles. I

never asked him if I might come and live at Lacock, but he seemed to accept it as a matter of course earlier, and naturally Aunt Rosamond was very glad as she was used to having me with her.

At first it felt a little odd living in a big country house, and it already seemed years since I had left Greenwich. There was rather more formality at Lacock Abbey than I had been used to. Uncle Charles certainly lived simply, but he liked regular ways, and he ate very slowly, so we generally sat a long time at meals. Between the house, the garden, her painting, and her various outside interests Aunt Rosamond was now fully occupied, but I rather felt I hadn't enough to do. I wondered how I should fill my time. I did not feel very happy about meeting the neighbours, and hoped we would not have much to do with them. I imagined they would all be mainly interested in bridge, smart clothes or fox hunting. But by degrees I found that there were many people whose interests were the same as ours, and also that they were unbelievably kind. Some neighbours started a club for reading Shakespeare, and we had another literary society where we met once a week and read papers that we had written on social history. I vaguely remember that some of these papers dealt with Robert Owen and the co-operative movement, with Joseph Arch and the farm labourers, some with the development of the poor law, and some with European history, "Russia in the time of the Boyars," and so on. Also it so happened that lectures on the history of France were arranged by Bristol University, to be held at Corsham, only 3½ miles from Lacock. The lecturer was Hilaire Belloc.

Some three miles away there lived a family of French extraction called Caillard, long settled in England, but intermarried again with French people, and speaking beautiful French. My Aunt Rosamond and Miss Marie Caillard became great friends, and we started a plan for reading French plays together, which went on for a couple of years and was great fun. Altogether there seemed to be something of a return to our highbrow days in the Queen Anne house at Dumfries.

When the Wiltshire Arts and Crafts Association was started, I

was asked to be Itinerant Secretary, because I had more spare time than most other people. This proved to be a most interesting post. I had not the routine jobs that fell to the General Secretary, but I went about the county, into all sorts of out-of-the-way places, to investigate traditional crafts, and also to see some of the new developments, such as the teaching of a very good type of Italian needlework to invalid men near Warminster. There were no motor buses in those days, but I could do a good deal by train, and our faithful Bird was always ready to take me in the carriage to any places within driving distance. It was wonderful how many interesting and unusual things we were able to collect for that first Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Among others, we found a family called Lancaster who had been traditional makers of sheep bells since medieval times. The bells were of a simple but attractive shape, and were of all sizes, the larger ones having a pleasant deep note. It is a long time now since I have seen any sheep wearing bells, the last time was on Kingsdown, one warm summer evening. The sound of the bells, as the sheep moved about grazing, was very delightful. Now, I expect, there are no sheep there.

There were other interests too: Connie Astley, who was a skilled wood carver, came to stay with us, and she taught carving to Aunt Rosamond, who proved a very quick pupil, and soon started a carving class for boys in Lacock Village. Aunt Rosamond was a first rate teacher and the lads enjoyed themselves, and did some very good work. She also taught the younger boys to make simple wooden toys, and I could help a little with that part. We arranged an Exhibition of Handicrafts, simply asking the Lacock people to lend us anything that had been actually made by themselves or some member of their family. It was astonishing how many things were produced, and how beautiful many of them were. The most interesting exhibit of all was a small organ, built by a man called Joseph Phelps, who had for many years carried on the trade of blacksmith in Lacock, though he must also have been skilled in many other crafts; for, besides forging the knee swell, and also making all the other metal parts, he had cut the keys from ivory and some sort of black wood, had made the wooden case and the pedal board, and carved two angels blowing

trumpets, gilded them, and fixed them on top of the instrument on either side. It was a marvellous piece of work from the hands of one man. I do not know whether it was still playable when I first saw it, but we were told that Joseph Phelps had played on it during his lifetime.

Besides the organ, we were lent many good specimens of wrought iron work, pierced and decorated warming pans, and other articles in brass and copper, most likely all made under the direction of Joseph Phelps. There was some wood carving also, one panel in a design of quinces and leaves had been copied from an old chest at Lacock Abbey. The man who carved this panel, one William Foden, was still alive, and his sister, nearly as old as he, lent us the confirmation veil that she had worked herself and worn at her own confirmation. It was in fine net with a delicate embroidered border. Another family lent us a coverlet for a child's cot, beautifully quilted in cream coloured satin. Yet another lent us some needlework of wool embroidery upon linen in a Jacobean design. In every case they told us that the article had been made by some past or present member of the family. One thing that impressed us very favourably was that the owners had never sold their precious possessions, though there must have been very difficult times during the "hungry forties," and later. They told us how often dealers had wished to buy these things from them, but that they had consistently refused to sell. Field Marshal Lord Methuen opened the Exhibition for us and made a kind and encouraging speech. Connie Astley, who was staying with us, made a speech in the evening; she was especially interested in the things that had been made by the village boys in my aunt's classes. Next year, and for several years after, we showed in the Home Arts and Industries Exhibition in London, and gained several awards. Once, a set of nursery furniture, made by the younger boys, was bought by Queen Alexandra.

I still looked about for more things to do. It was before the days of Baden-Powell and the Boy Scouts, but movements in that direction had already started; first the Boys Brigade in Glasgow, and then, in England, the Church Lads' Brigade. This movement was active in Bristol, and other West Country towns, and we

knew it was doing much good. We had a meeting and found that the lads were very keen that a company should be formed in Lacock. We thought it would be wise to start with a small number, not more than twenty, but so many names were sent in that we had to make a waiting list. Although the movement was called the Church Lads' Brigade, one or two boys belonging to Non-conformist families wished to join, and we obtained permission for this. The main features were drill (which included physical jerks) every Thursday, and a Bible Class every Sunday. There was also the chance of joining with other lads in field days and summer camps. We arranged that a retired sergeant who lived nearby, should teach them the elements of drill, and I took the Bible Class, as the vicar had not time for extra work on a Sunday. I did not think we should have any difficulty in finding a young man to take command of the company, as we could give him such a likely set of lads; in fact, I had one such young man in mind, but neither he, nor anyone else, would take it on. So there we were with everything ready, except a man to take command. However, in the ranks there was a lad of sixteen, who had a good sense of responsibility, and he was coached by the sergeant, until he could drill the company. I promised to be at the parade every Thursday, and to remain till they dismissed, so that the young fellow could feel he had someone behind him. Headquarters gave us leave to make this arrangement, and it really worked extremely well. If, for some reason, I could not be present at drill, the lads obeyed their young leader perfectly and we found we could send the whole bunch, under his command, to Bristol or elsewhere, to parade with other companies. The reports we had of their behaviour and their smart appearance were very satisfactory. After two years, we agreed to their earnest request to have a band. We had seven bugles, a bass drum, and two side drums. It was rather a problem to find a place for them to practise without annoying other people. I asked Uncle Charles if they might use a room opposite the pantry, and he readily agreed. So for some weeks they practised there, while I sat and knitted, feeling as if my head would be blown off. Strangely enough, the sound did not carry very far through the house. Uncle Charles was inter-

ested, and said thoughtfully: "I imagine the last time drums were beaten inside this house was probably in the reign of Charles II."

Aunt Rosamond continued to go abroad from time to time, to make the sketches which she sold for charitable objects. She always took one of us with her, and sometimes two. While we were away, either my mother or another sister came to Lacock to housekeep for Uncle Charles. I had only been, so far, to the Scandinavian countries, so it was a great joy to cross the Channel at last and go to France and Italy, especially as Aunt Rosamond spoke both French and Italian fluently.

One spring, she, Grace and I had a delightful journey. After a few very happy days spent in Florence, we went to Massa Carrara where the marble quarries are. We were the only people in the hotel except for some military officers, who were all most disconcertingly polite, springing to their feet with a clanking of swords whenever we entered the dining-room. There were generally some troops quartered in Massa, as it was a place liable to disturbances. What I chiefly remember is the picturesqueness of the long carts loaded with blocks of marble and drawn by white oxen, the men lying beside the marble on the carts, their clothes and hair all powdered with the white dust. There was a wonderful variety of shades of white, if one can use such an expression. The white of the marble, the white of the oxen, the white of the men's working clothes and of their shining teeth, the white of the dusty road, and in contrast the dark eyes of the oxen, and the merry sunburnt faces of the quarrymen, as they lay on the carts and came slowly down the hill singing and whistling.

We only spent a few days at Massa and then managed to hire a sort of pony chaise with a boy to drive it. It was drawn by two small horses, and when I asked the boy their names I was much amused when he said one of them was called "Gee Gee." I expect it was an affectionate form of "Luigi." We drove out of the town, up hill and past new houses in building. I was surprised to see women masons working beside the men. When I asked the boy about this, he said: "Oh yes, there are muratore as well as muratori." One woman in particular, I remember; she was on the top of a fairly high building, wearing a white kerchief over her

head, and a dress in a lovely shade of red. She was laying bricks, and a boy was going up and down a ladder feeding bricks to her in a hod. She did not seem to mind the height in the least and looked perfectly serene and very handsome. As we went up and up the hilly road the air grew colder, for it was only the middle of April; every now and then we got out and walked a little to warm ourselves, and to save the horses, though they were sturdy, plucky little things.

On the first evening we reached a picturesque village called Fivizzano, and asked to be taken in at a little inn called "Il Globo." The proprietress was a quaint old lady with very few teeth and even Aunt Rosamond couldn't make out what she was saying. The accommodation was limited and a trifle rough, but the welcome was kind, and we were soon having a good meal of risotto and red wine. The old lady had been a little afraid that she might not be able to satisfy English strangers, and had murmured "Corpo di Bacco" and, doubtfully, "Speriamo," but when we told her how much we had enjoyed our meal she was all smiles. We always throve upon the local cooking wherever we might be, and Italian cooking is essentially good. They say French cooking was not so renowned before Catherine de Medici brought her Italian chef with her to Paris, and that it was he who raised French cooking to its high level.

Aunt Rosamond gave us one rule; we were never to drink water without first boiling it. At Fivizzano we could see the well, low down in the village street and all the dirt of the road seeping into it. As a matter of fact, I don't think those Italian peasants ever drank water and I am not sure that French peasants do either. I know I was once in a French household where the servants commonly drank wine mixed with water and that on one occasion, where there happened to be no wine, they mixed the water liberally with vinegar, "to make it wholesome," they said.

Aunt Rosamond and Grace sketched vigorously and indeed there was a picture whichever way you looked. As I couldn't draw, I wandered about and tried to talk to the children, partly to occupy them and keep them from breathing down my aunt's neck. My Italian was poor, but I tried to give the children a

version of "The House that Jack Built." They laughed immoderately, as much at my funny Italian as at the story itself, and in return they told me a repetitive story of their own, which began: "E morto salsiciotto," if I remember right. I never quite understood what it was all about; there was something about the master of the house being dead, and that he was a sausage and that the doors shook and the windows rattled, but I have never felt sure about it, especially as "sausage" seemed so unlikely. We always came back to the inn quite hungry for dinner. Our breakfast had been black coffee with sugar, and bread with a little cheese. There was no butter nor milk, but we didn't mind at all. A number of people used to come into the inn for the midday meal, which was abundant and satisfying. If we were thirsty there was always wine which we took without water, and also there were oranges and sometimes other fruit.

I think we were four days in Fivizzano and grew to feel quite at home there. One of the children made great friends with us. I have forgotten her name; she was about nine years old; I remember how she came one evening to see us at the inn and showed us her school copy-books, which were beautifully written. She had a bad cold in her head and constantly required her handkerchief. Every time this occurred, she used to get up and ask: "Col permesso?" and then go into a corner of the room, use her handkerchief, and return. Poor little girl, this happened every few minutes. I never knew so polite a child. The evening before we left she brought her copy-books again, and wished to give them to me as a farewell present. I could not possibly accept such a sacrifice, so, with Aunt Rosamond's help, we explained to her that they were such lovely books that she must really keep them to show to her children and her grandchildren. She understood this and I don't think her little feelings were hurt.

Next morning we set off on the road again. The mountains were to the south of us, and it was very cold, for the snow was still lying on the northern slopes. After a while we stopped at a little village, but there was no possibility there of getting coffee or anything else that was hot. We bought some bread and some local cheese, and then both Grace and I suddenly felt we would

like some raw onions which we had seen in a little shop. They were not spring onions but just ordinary big white ones. We bought them and ate them with our bread and cheese, crunching them up like apples. I can only say that very soon after that, we felt a glow of warmth coming into our toes, so it must have been a wise instinct.

Our next stop after Fivizzano was at a place called Castel Nuovo on the River Serchio. Here we were amazed at the women washing clothes in the icy water of the river. There were little garnets—or what looked exactly like garnets—embedded in the great stones which lay by the side of the river; we tried and tried with hammers and in every way to get some of them out, but never succeeded. The streets of Castel Nuovo were very narrow, no sun could get into them and so they were very cold, but it must be a glorious place in the height of summer. There were beautiful walks, and the pretty daughter of the inn used to take me about while the others were sketching.

After driving to Bagni di Lucca, we said goodbye to our little carriage, the horses and the boy. This journey was the longest and perhaps the most interesting that we ever made with Aunt Rosamond, but every year she took some kind of sketching trip, not necessarily abroad, sometimes with her sister Ela, when she was still alive, sometimes with one or two of us. Whatever the weather, she always brought back a good many pictures, and she used to hold an exhibition and sale of her paintings every spring in London. The Dean of Westminster gave her permission to hold her sale, every alternate year, in the Jerusalem Chamber. The drawings were shown unframed, on cardboard mounts, and were fixed on screens standing round the room, so that there should be no risk to the precious panelling. I can't remember exactly, but I think my aunt's drawings, her sister Ela and my mother also contributing some, brought in £100 to £150 a year for the various charities she wanted to help.

One summer, I was staying with my mother's former bridesmaid and her daughter, who then lived near Bristol, and I planned a coasting voyage to meet my mother and Mary, who were sketching at Kyle of Lochalsh in Ross-shire. I started from the

Welsh Back at Bristol in a steamer which went to Glasgow via Belfast. I remember now how smelly it was at the Welsh Back that summer evening, and the boat lay there ages longer than she was supposed to do, but the journey next day along the coast of Wales was very beautiful, passing Cardigan Bay and seeing all the mountains behind. At Belfast we discharged cargo, and had time for a short drive on an Irish car, and on reaching Glasgow I took another steamer for Kyle, where I met the others. We all three of us stayed at Kyle for a couple of days before taking a steamer for Stromness in Orkney. The weather was lovely to start with, and we sailed near enough to Cape Wrath to see the seals lying basking on the rocks, but came into some rough weather in the Pentland Firth. Stromness was very picturesque and my mother found it hard to tear herself away. But she wanted to go on to Shetland, which we did and, soon after that, returned home. There were coasting steamers at that date, owned by Langlands & Co. of Liverpool, which made a complete circuit of the British Isles, from Liverpool to Liverpool again. I often wish I had made the whole of this round trip. My sister Mary and I once came back from Shetland to Aberdeen and thence to London by sea, so that the only stretch I have never managed to fit in is from London to Bristol, and I daresay that this might still be possible, though I believe Langlands' ships no longer run.

We had some delightful friends in the West of Ireland whom we called our Irish cousins. My brother Jack stayed as much in Ireland as he did in England, and even had an Irish minute hand fixed to his watch to save continually altering it by twenty minutes. He was a good shot and a good fisherman, but he loved the Irish people as much as he loved sport. I well remember once going over to Ireland with my eldest sister Constance. We went from Dumfries to Glasgow by train, and at Glasgow took a little steamer called *The Fern* to Sligo and on to Ballina in Co. Mayo. At Ballina the Knox Gores, our so-called cousins, came to meet us, and in a couple of hours we were absorbed in a wonderful family party of father, mother, a son of twenty-five or so, four schoolboys and their tutor and five delightful daughters, who ranged in years from twenty-three to eleven, and were all pretty.

Life was cheerful, inconsequent and thoroughly enjoyable. As our fly drew up to the front door the horse shied at a rocking horse which was standing just in front of the house. There were chickens on the steps, and more chickens inside the house as we went in. It was about 12 o'clock, and Ethel, who was just my age, took charge of me at once, and said we should go into the kitchen and get something to eat. The cook was busy at the sink, so Ethel snatched a couple of tartlets off a shelf, thrust one into my hand and rushed out of the kitchen with me after her. The cook ran after us with imprecations. She missed Ethel but succeeded in smacking me with a dish cloth. After this, you can imagine I felt I was certainly one of the family. We were fourteen round the table at lunch, and it soon appeared that there was not a bedroom available for us inside the house, but that we were to sleep in the "casual ward." This was reached by climbing through the scullery window (I can't imagine now why the back door could not have been unlocked), crossing a few yards of stone paving, and entering a big bare room that had a couple of beds and chairs, a table and hip bath in it. Each evening, when bedtime came, the eldest son gallantly helped us through the scullery window, walked with us to our quarters and wished us goodnight. We always dressed for dinner and we danced most of the evening. The two eldest girls had lovely evening garments of the type that were then called tea-gowns. They were made of soft grey velvet with fronts of pale yellow silk and suited the wearers admirably.

Constance and I were rather shocked one afternoon when we saw the two girls helping to milk the cows, their lovely grey velvet gowns tucked up round them. Animals were very much in the picture. A tame donkey used constantly to walk into the house; once the two girls got him a few steps up the stairs, and were trying hard to push him as far as their mother's bedroom when the eldest son came along and said: "There're donkeys enough in the house already without bringing this moke in." The mother of the family was exceedingly easy-going and sweet-tempered; she never minded what we did. Sometimes her husband had enough of the constant rushing about and din of voices, but he never

complained; he just went and shut himself up in his study, where he sat alone and played the flute. One evening we were all chattering together and presently started discussing what kind of man we would marry. Ethel said she would marry just the handsomest man she could find, upon which Constance rather sententiously remarked that this wasn't a sufficient reason for marrying anybody; but then Mrs. Knox Gore announced cheerfully: "Well, I declare I married their father for nothing else," which left my sister without a leg to stand on. There were a number of servants about the place, some living in the house, some outside. Michael was the butler, and the footman was a much older man called John, tall and lanky and very plain. One evening I remember only Michael was waiting at table, so Mrs. Knox Gore asked: "Where's John at all?" "He's drunk, Ma'am" was the immediate reply, and no further notice was taken. John appeared the following morning and nothing more was said.

Our meals were always pretty much the same—salmon, sea trout, brown trout, ducks and chickens. The chickens were small; they cost 6d. each to buy, and six or eight would be served together in the same big dish. All the people working in the house or on the property belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, except, as it chanced, a gardener who was a member of the Church of England. One Sunday evening, when Mrs. Knox Gore was walking through the garden, she noticed this man sitting on a wall and reading his Prayer Book: "Well, Patrick," she said, "and do you know all that is in that book?" "No, ma'am," he said, "I do not; and who could know all that is in that book, but if ye love the Lord your God with all your soul and with all your strength ye have the whole menagerie then." Strangely enough the Knox Gores themselves were Plymouth Brethren. They never took us to any services, so I do not know what these were like, but Mrs. Knox Gore used to read prayers in the evening, usually very late, any time between ten o'clock and midnight. Sometimes the girls would talk to us about adult baptism. Alice, the second daughter, had refused to undergo this rite, saying that nothing would induce her to be dipped in the river by the station-master, who was the chief pastor of the local flock. Later on, I

believe, she joined the Church of England. Some years afterwards, when she was married, and had a baby daughter, I went to lunch with her. She looked prettier than ever and very happy; I remember her going upstairs with her baby in her arms and murmuring all sorts of pretty Irish endearments to it—"Acushla, darling wee one," and so on. Then suddenly, as the baby began, in the manner of babies, to bubble at the mouth, there was a quick change of tone: "Will ye leave spitting, ye young filth," but I am sure the baby had a very happy home.

Another landmark was Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Connie Astley, who was kindness itself to me during those first difficult years when I was teaching at Greenwich, arranged to take me with a party of other friends to a house in the Borough High Street, from which we could watch the procession go by close under our window. I was very tired, but Connie arranged everything so that I could rest comfortably in an armchair until the actual arrival of the procession, when we had an excellent view of Queen Victoria. Later in the evening she took us all on an omnibus which she had hired—they still had open tops then—and we drove through the illuminated streets. That was the greatest fun. Several times our bus had to stand still in the dense traffic and once we noticed, far below us, but quite near, a coster's donkey cart driven by a man who seemed to have brought all his own children and most of his neighbours', for the little cart was packed. On our bus we had brought provisions, buns and fruit and all sorts of things, so two of us ran down into the street and nipped into the crowd, everything being stationary, and managed to deliver a couple of bags of good things to the little donkey cart. A burst of applause rose from the surrounding vehicles, which rather disconcerted us.

Connie Astley was always a splendid friend to me. Even apart from the delightful holidays at Arisaig I fairly lost count of the many pleasant things she planned for her young friends: concerts, theatres, and opportunities for all kinds of things which would not otherwise have come into our lives. She had a fund of dry humour; once, when we were in a cab, and she was going to call on a friend, she found, on reaching the house, that she

had made a mistake in the address. There was nothing for it but to drive all the way home again and make a fresh start. By the time we had at last reached the right house her friend had gone out, upon which she drily remarked: "There is nothing so expensive as being a fool." Another time we were all sitting together discussing books, and somebody said that modern novels were horribly depressing. Miss Astley said: "I have never read any book quite so depressing as my bank book." Aunt Rosamond had many things in common with Connie Astley, travelling, painting, finding wild flowers, etc., and more than once we were all together in the South of France.

CHAPTER SIX

Love of London – Sailors' Home in Antwerp – Death of Aunt Rosamond – Second Visit to Norway

As the years went on, my love for London continued to deepen. There seemed to be no end to the things that one could see, do, and discover in that great city. So many people did not seem to know in the least what a mine of various interests London was. I remember a friend of ours, a girl of my own age, who was staying with her mother and sister in a hired house in South Kensington, and was considerably bored with life. She said she wished so much she could go abroad. So I asked her to come out with me the next day. She agreed; not, I think, expecting very much.

We set off at about 10.30 a.m. I took her first to Mark Lane and we walked round through the narrow road to Fenchurch Street and looked at the shipping offices. Next we pushed our way down Thames Street, dodging the men who were carrying big boxes of oranges on their backs. On and on we went, until we reached Wapping Old Stairs. By this time my companion was getting interested. Down the stairs we went until we reached the river, and there, wonderful to relate, was a rowing boat with a man sitting in it. We asked him how much it would cost to row us out into the Pool and back. He said 6d.—this was many years ago—and off we started. He was a very interesting companion and told us all sorts of things about the ships we passed, and the things he had seen and the men he had known, with gruesome tales about the bodies he had helped to fish out of the river. We were quite a good while on the water, and when we got back to Wapping Old Stairs, we gave him 2s. and he was delighted. Next, I proposed that we should go east to Shadwell, and we soon got into Shadwell Market among the booths and stands, which were served by voluble, vociferating Jews, with

oily black ringlets about their ears, and endless gesticulations. There we bought some salted cucumber and smoked salmon, and in a little baker's shop nearby secured some black rye bread and retired to a peaceful, if rather gloomy, corner of Shadwell Station to eat our provender, for by this time we were hungry, and a little footsore. I must say we thoroughly enjoyed that meal, partly because it was so completely un-English, partly because we were very hungry; and of course, at our age, we didn't worry whether the preparation and sale of these provisions complied with all the requirements of the Food and Drugs Act.

The question now arose of where to go next, and I remembered Mrs. Welin and the Scandinavian Sailors' Home at the West India Docks; so we went on there, rather hoping we might be offered some coffee, for the salted viands which had formed our lunch had left us rather thirsty. As usual, we found a welcome in the large and cheerful building, and more especially in Mrs. Welin's sitting-room with its pictures, china, and flowering plants in pots. The excellent Swedish coffee soon made its appearance, together with plates of delicious and unfamiliar little cakes, and we sat down and chatted over them to Mrs. Welin and her helpers. When we gave her a donation for her work among the sailors she was grateful and delighted. There was sometimes a certain asperity in Mrs. Welin's manner, but she had a warm heart. Early during her work in London she had a very nasty experience. She had started her Sailors' Home some few months earlier, and already its wholesome attractions had lowered the takings of the low-class pubs and disorderly houses in the district, and their owners were out for revenge. One afternoon she was walking down one of these streets, when a woman stopped her and began asking her some questions about the Sailors' Home. While Mrs. Welin was replying, she felt something touch her neck and the next moment realised that her head was in a noose, and that some men in a room above were about to haul her up. The woman, who was of course an accomplice, did nothing. At that moment, by the blessing of Providence, a couple of sailors came round the corner, caught hold of the rope and set Mrs. Welin free just in time. One of her helpers,

who told me the story, said: "She was not hurt, but it made her feel very nervous for some time." Her courage and patience had been rewarded by the great success of the Home, which had been more than once, I think, enlarged, and by the comfort that she had been able to provide for the sailors of her country. Very few Scandinavians now come into the Port of London, and the Home has been taken over by the Salvation Army.

When we got back to South Kensington again we found it was only a quarter past four! My companion was greatly refreshed, and said that she felt she had been abroad for days.

One of the daughters in the family with whom Mary and I stayed on the Christiania Fjord wrote to me from Antwerp, where she was helping to run a Scandinavian Sailors' Home. She was really only the assistant, the home being under the charge of an English lady, but this lady had been called away, and Hannah was alone. She asked me to come out for a couple of weeks and help her. The weather was very cold and foggy, and as I went down to the docks at Harwich I thought of Mrs. Gamp and her references to the "Ankworks package," and thought it was rather fun to be travelling on an Antwerp packet in actual fact. When we got into the Scheldt it was foggier than in England, and most bitterly cold. Even the customs officials who came on board were blue-nosed and shivering, and certainly they didn't want to detain us long. I had brought with me in a basket some sprays of holly, and also a small plum pudding in case any British seamen might stray into the Home. The customs man poked at the basket and asked me what on earth I had got there. With chattering teeth, I answered: "Pouding, M'sieur, et des fleurs." "Pouding et des fleurs!" he muttered contemptuously as he chalked the basket.

Hannah came to meet me and took me to No. 37, Canal des Vieux Lions, where she lived. It was a first floor flat, and she had a sort of reading and writing room for the sailors, a small office for herself, and also a place from which she could serve coffee. On the floor above was a bedroom with two beds. The whole establishment was small, but Hannah could manage to stuff in an extraordinarily large number of men at need. She

showed me with pride her big Christmas tree, which was already being decorated with the men's help, and then she ran across the road with a tin pail to collect our dinner from the German Sailors' Home. She generally got food from them to save time, and it was always good, cheap, and plentiful. The first day, I remember, it was a stew of pork and cabbage mixed with carraway seeds, and there was a basin of potatoes as well. During the later part of the day a number of sailors came in, Swedish, Danish or Norwegian, and Hannah showed me how to change their money and give them writing materials and sell them stamps. She had rather a beguiling way with her; she seemed in some ways older than her age and was very motherly. She would sit and talk to some lad and he would tell her about his home, and she would follow with interest all he told her, and then by degrees she would ask if he had written home lately. As often as not, the answer was in the negative, and then Hannah would generally persuade the boy to write. Many a grateful letter she received from parents after she had got their sons into touch with them again. Sometimes a lad said he couldn't write to his parents, because they must be so angry with him, he had run away from home and never told them where he was. Hannah would make it clear that his parents would be so thankful to hear he was alive and well, that there would be no room for reproaches, especially if he said, as he truthfully could say, that he was sorry for what had happened.

In the morning we sometimes went to the hospital to visit seamen who were ill, or we went down to the docks to see what ships had come in. There were no uniformed nurses in the hospital; the patients were attended by nuns, and there were also some men helpers for lifting and so on. Hannah once sent me with a message to a Swedish sailor, and he quite understood my indifferent Norwegian. But when he knew I was English, he got rather excited and clung to my hand repeating: "You will not allow the Russians to take our country?" I think he was feverish, poor chap, but I promised him we wouldn't, and he was satisfied. On my way back from the hospital one day, I was in a street near the docks, and passed a little store which sold ropes and pulleys

and other things connected with ships. There were some rather fascinating little pottery animals in the shop. I wanted to buy some, but knew no Flemish except: "Alst u Belieft" (If you please). So I tried French: "Les petits animaux . . ." No good. Then "Alst u Belieft" and "le petit animal." Still no good. Finally I managed to make my way round a coil of rope and pointed to the little things in question. "Ah," said the man, "Beests!" I might just as well have talked English.

Visiting the ships with Hannah was great fun. We went aboard any that flew one of the Scandinavian flags, if there happened to be a gangway across to it, and we gave them the address of our place. They were always very grateful, especially if they were in Antwerp for the first time. If, however, the ship we wanted was lying out a little way from the quay we had to hail her, and then it was a case of shouting "*Merkur* ahoy," or "*Kron Prins Kristian* ahoy," or whatever her name might be. Hannah had a strong voice and in a minute somebody was sure to come up on deck, and then we gave them our address. The docks covered a great expanse and sometimes we had a good deal of walking. I remember our picking our way through a quantity of spilt paraffin oil in the America Dock, but Hannah always knew her way about and also where the Scandinavian ships were likely to be.

If we could leave someone else in charge of our place, we sometimes went out together in the evenings. The streets were thronged with sailors, and so were the dancing halls, public houses, and small theatres. Hannah could pretty well guess who was a fellow Scandinavian, and she would touch the man on the shoulder and give him our address. I found it rather difficult to do this, but sometimes managed it. Hannah showed me a big dancing hall called "The Black Cat"; we could see, through the open doors, the sailors and women dancing inside, and then Hannah took me along the side of the building, where a narrow lane led down to the dock, showed me a kind of shoot projecting from the back of the dancing hall, and told me that often the sailors were drugged and robbed, and that their unconscious bodies were slid down that shoot into the water. After hearing

this I did not so much mind tapping men on the shoulder, if perhaps it might save their lives. Those were bad days in Antwerp, for the police were often in league with the touts and sharks. That was before Albert I came to the throne, and Antwerp had the worst of reputations. One Norwegian captain, a friend of Hannah's father, told us he would rather take his ship to any port in the world, not excluding Rio, than to Antwerp.

Immediately under the flat where we lived, on the ground floor, there was a small café, fairly quiet in the day time, but pretty noisy at night. On New Year's Eve there was a tremendous din, which went on long after our own place was closed. It sounded like violent quarrelling and furniture being smashed, and we couldn't get to sleep for ages. Next morning I started out for the hospital, and luckily was walking in the middle of the road, when from another café a few doors down two men stumbled out, stripped to the waist and fighting with knives. One stuck his knife into the back of the other and both fell on to the pavement; some more men came out of the café and hauled them in. The man was badly stabbed, but though there were many people passing along the street, no one seemed to pay any attention.

The year 1906 was marked by sorrow. First, my sister, Constance, who had been happily married for over ten years, lost a dear little girl of seven after a very short illness. Then, in April, my Aunt Rosamond, who had gone with Mary to stay with some friends at Bordighera, fell ill. Mary wrote to us that she was rather listless and not inclined to paint, but that they hoped it was something temporary, and that they were going on, as planned, to San Remo. They did so and were lucky in having the advice of a very competent Italian doctor, who knew Aunt Rosamond well. However, she did not improve and my mother and I decided to go out to her, leaving Grace to keep house for Uncle Charles. We arrived to find that Mary was still very anxious and had engaged an English nurse, the doctor having recommended that Aunt Rosamond should stay entirely in bed. She knew us and seemed glad to see us, but for the most part was dreamy and listless, quite unlike her usual self. She was suffer-

ing from an obscure heart affection and the doctor took a grave view. Mother wired for our brother, Willie, to come out and he reached us next day. Aunt Rosamond knew him also and seemed pleased to see him, but soon sank into a kind of semi-consciousness and rambled in her talk. Two days later she died. I don't think she had any distress. Willie said the commendatory prayers over her in a loud clear voice and she may have heard him. We felt glad afterwards that he had been at her bedside and not some strange clergyman, and also that Dr. Agnetti was a friend of hers. The nurse, too, was gentle and considerate, so we had much for which to be thankful.

We buried her in the Campo Santo between the cypresses and the sea in a spot which was then very beautiful and untouched, though it may be quite different now. She had known San Remo for many years and had stayed there in her girlhood and often talked affectionately about it. After the funeral we all went back to England together, and I began to feel the blank very deeply. It was a comfort to find Grace at Lacock and also to know that my Uncle Charles had taken the news calmly, for he was a rather highly strung person, and he had grown to depend very much on his sister. Of course, there was no question of his being left alone, and it was rather touching that he never asked which of us would stay with him; he just took for granted that one of us would do so. It seemed obvious that I should be the one, having been at Lacock more than the others, and knowing, perhaps, more exactly what Aunt Rosamond's wishes were about many things. But my mother did not want Lacock to become a burden to me, and said she would come and look after Uncle Charles if ever I wanted to be away. Grace, also, who had always followed the fortunes of Lacock with close interest, and had spent much more time there than the other members of the family, said she would come along and help me as often as she could. This, of course, made a great difference; but all the same, those first few months at Lacock, without my aunt, were very difficult. She and I had for so many years been close companions that it was not possible for anyone to take her place. My uncle also felt the loss, but he was a man of exceptional reserve, and when he spoke of

her, which was rarely, he did so in a completely matter-of-fact way.

But, as so often happens, help was just round the corner. Our dear cousins, Herbert and Rosie Leaf, asked me to join them in a trip to Norway, and we left Marlborough in the last week of July, joining the rest of the party at Hull. We were ten in all, a Mr. X., his wife and daughters, also Mr. Durrant, one of the masters at Marlborough, besides Herbert and Rosie Leaf and me. Herbert and Mr. X. had jointly taken a house at Svenningdal, in the mountains east of Mosjoen, for two months.

The last part of the journey had to be by road, and at one point we knew we should have to stop and get fresh ponies. We had expected to reach this place at about 10 p.m., but when we got there it was close on midnight. There was a sort of posting station for travellers and we hoped, in spite of the late hour, we might be able to get some coffee, for we were tired and hungry. When we walked into the house, a cheerful woman led us to a dining-room, where hot soup and a complete dinner was ready for us. We were amazed and asked her how she could manage to serve all this so late at night. She said: "At this time of year, travellers often come here during the night and need some food." "But when do you sleep?" we asked. "I sleep in the winter," she calmly replied.

The pony traps were great fun, some were stolkjoerre, some carioles; and, of course, we fell in love with the ponies at first sight. I had a cariole, which is a very small carriage with a single seat, and with odd little stirrup-like iron steps, into which you stick your feet. I was wearing a short brown dress and brown stockings, and the last part of our drive was through thick woods swarming with horse flies. The flies continually settled on my legs and bit me. I think they thought I was part of the brown pony. I tried to push them off with the whip handle, both from my legs and from the poor pony, but they kept on settling and biting, so that when we reached the house at Svenningdal my stockings were fairly stuck to my legs with patches of dried blood. But, except for being a trifle sore, the bites did not give me any trouble, and never inflamed.

The house at Svenningdal was large, and we had three maids, Thora, Petra, and Jorun, who welcomed us with radiant smiles. We also had three boatmen, Karl, who was the head one, Elias, and Joseph. As the place was very remote, Mr. X. had bought some provisions at Trondhjem, and of course there was milk and the fish we caught, and later on the ptarmigan. Below us, in the valley, ran the river, which went through a whole chain of lakes. It was pretty hot and we enjoyed some very pleasant bathing and, of course, most of us fished; so that between catching them and eating them, we talked about fish most of the day.

Rosie Leaf was much interested in the wild flowers and both she and I loved gathering the wild fruits. Never in any place have I seen such a profusion: raspberries, strawberries, bilberries, cranberries, and cloudberries. When I first settled down to pick them and found there was generally more fruit than leaves, I thought of the words: "Thou spreadst a table in my sight." In particular, I had never seen so many cloudberries before, though we had eaten some when we went to the Betzmann's, and I remember, as a small child, my father bringing us a few he had found on the higher slopes of Queensberry in Dumfriesshire. But there are very few in Scotland. The plants like damp ground, at a high altitude, and their habit is something like a strawberry, though the leaves are larger. They grow close to the ground, not climbing like a bramble, nor tall like a raspberry. The berries are more like blackberries than anything else, green at first, then red, but not ripe until they turn an opaque yellow very like amber in colour. Then they are delicious, not so very sweet, but with a slightly acid freshness, and a wonderful aromatic flavour unlike anything else in the world. We used literally to bring home basinfuls, and in fact a basin was the only thing in which to collect them, for they had so much juice it would have leaked through a basket. These cloudberries have an interesting property; they do not easily mould or decay. We found they could be left for several days on a dish without any alteration, except becoming rather softer and wetter as the juice ran out of them. We were told that they were sent in barrels to Leith where, at that time, a good many Norwegians lived, and that these

people could keep them for months without heating them and without adding anything to them, and at their leisure they would make them into jam. It may be that the berries have some antiseptic quality.

The eldest X. daughter and I used sometimes to go off together, and once we walked along the lake and up to the steep wooded slopes without any particular object in view. Suddenly we heard not far off a crackling sound, like branches being broken, and it crossed our minds that there might be an elk somewhere about, for we knew there were elks in that part of Norway. We stood still and listened; the crackling came nearer, and we saw, not an elk, but a bull, an undersized yellow bull, with reddish eyes. When he saw us, he began to bellow, and we began to run down the hill through the undergrowth. Peggy said to me: "Jump sideways." So we jumped sideways, she in front, and I behind her, over a fallen log and off at a right angle. This made no difference; the bull was following us all right, and bellowing at intervals. Our one hope was now the lake, and we got down to the water's edge before him, jumped in, and started swimming. He went in up to his knees and then stopped and stood bellowing. As we had only light cotton frocks on, we were able to swim, and I had a feeling in my mind that even if he did try to swim after us, he couldn't very well toss us while he was swimming. Presently we were round the point of a little promontory that stuck out into the lake, the bull was out of sight, and we waded ashore. A couple of peasants were there cutting hay. They looked at us in amazement. I told them a bull had been chasing us. One man said: "I have a bull but he is tied up in his shed." I described the bull, and he said: "Yes, that is my bull, but I cannot think how he was able to get out." "Is he dangerous?" I asked. "Yes he is," replied the man, "that is why I always keep him shut up." "Well," I said, "then you must take us back to Svenningdal in your boat; we are not going back through that wood again." So he rowed us back and brought us to a landing place quite near our house. When the others saw our wet clothes and heard our story they were rather inclined to think we were making a fuss. But, a couple of hours later we heard bellowing, and there was

the bull approaching the back door. We shut the door against it, but it banged the door with its head again and again, and finally set off down the path beside the river, slobbering at the muzzle and bellowing at intervals. The news had meantime got about that the bull was loose, and our postman, who usually came on foot up the path to the house, was told to take a boat up the river and come by another way. A party of men went out after the creature and finally he was shot.

Another time, when most of the party had gone to fish in one of the upper lakes and were not returning till next day, Peggy and I planned to camp for the night at a very pretty place a couple of miles away, which we could reach by boat. We took a tent, a frying pan, fishing things and some food, and also the youngest boatman, Joseph. He rowed us to the place and helped us to put up the tent, and then went to a farm which was not far off and got us some milk. After that, he took the boat home and left us for the night. The party who had gone to the upper lake were to row past this point on the following day and would pick us up. The evening was quite lovely with a beautiful sunset, and later on we could see the lights of the little farm twinkling in the distance. We made a successful fire, cooked our supper, and heated up some coffee we had brought with us. There weren't any horse flies and very few mosquitoes, so we sat for a long time talking by our fire till it got really dark. Then we undid our sleeping bags, killed a mosquito or two, and secured the tent door. Peggy dropped off to sleep at once, but I lay awake, perhaps for an hour or more, listening to the water, and thinking what a lovely place we had chosen. Presently I heard a sound that made me shiver, though it was quite a good way off, because it was like a wolf howling. I told myself I was an idiot and that very likely it was just some dog at the farm, but the sound came again, and I felt quite sure that it was really a wolf. I wished so much we had kept the fire going, but I was afraid to go out and re-light it, and also I didn't want to wake Peggy or say anything to her about wolves. Never was I so glad to see the dawn, and by the time it came there were no more howls. After we had cooked our breakfast we did some quite unsuccessful fishing,

and presently the others came along in their boat, and helped us take down the tent, and we all went home together.

I suppose it may have been a month or two later, quite at the end of our stay, when we all went past that very place, because some of the party were going to shoot ptarmigan. When we got there, I noticed Elias putting leads on the two dogs, and I asked him why; he replied: "There are many wolves about here, I do not wish to have them loose."

We were very lucky about one thing that summer; it was a lemming year. I believe it is once in three years that these little creatures go swarming across the country from one side to the other, taking a fixed direction and never turning aside. They swim over rivers and lakes and go straight on. Quite a number of them are caught by fishes. Herbert once landed a big trout, and found a complete furry lemming inside it, just bolted whole. Lemmings are pretty little things, rather larger than mice and more furry. Their colouring is variegated in brown, yellow and black. They are hot-tempered little beggars; the Norwegians have a saying: "As cross as a lemming." We sometimes amused ourselves by waggling the top joint of a fishing rod at the entrance to their holes, and out would come the lemming quite fearless and very cross, and start biting hard at the wooden thing that ventured to approach its home.

Another fortunate circumstance for us was that Elias had a cousin who had married into a Lapp family. Lapps as a rule are reserved and do not wish to be visited by Norwegians, let alone English people, but Elias told us that this particular family of Lapps had brought their reindeer to a place not far off, and that, if he came with us, he was quite sure they would make us welcome. This was most unlooked-for and exciting news. We thought it would be wiser not to be too large a party, so only Herbert and Rosie, the other Marlborough master, and I went with Elias.

It was a lovely day in September; we walked uphill, and yet again uphill, until at last we reached a sort of plateau surrounded by small hills. A good deal of snow was lying on the ground, and in the middle there was a pretty little lake. Near it there were

several tents and a couple of hundred reindeer. The first thing we noticed was a young girl of sixteen or so, wearing a scarlet cloth cap. When she saw us coming she ran down to the lake, knelt down and carefully adjusted the cap, looking at her reflection in the water. I suppose that was her usual mirror. Elias went up to one of the tents and told the occupants that he had brought us to visit them. They came out to meet us and were most friendly. We were asked into the largest tent and were invited to sit on some piles of furs and to drink coffee. The coffee had sugar in it, and also in each cup was a small piece of reindeer cheese, a firm unsalted white curd, so the combination was not amiss. They could all talk a kind of Norwegian and we managed to understand most of what they said. They showed us some of their treasured possessions, carved wooden boxes and spoons, and some very pretty little drinking cups of silver, besides hand-woven aprons and kerchiefs. They seemed to want to give us some of these things as presents, but we could not feel sure that this was not just a formal gesture of courtesy, and we could not ask Elias, because he did not really understand English. So Herbert managed, very delicately, to thank them in Norwegian, and to say that we were not able to take things back to England with us; at any rate he contrived to say something that met the case, for they seemed quite pleased. The next thing they did was to hand us each a small saucer of reindeer's milk, which was quite white, but as rich as cream. Their practice is to put the cheese into the coffee and eat the cream separately.

There were two families; in one tent lived father, mother, and some nearly grown-up children, and in the other a younger couple with a little girl of seven and a baby. The younger woman invited us to come and sit for a while in her tent, and to our amazement she told her small daughter to cut up some wood and light a fire. The little thing picked up a hatchet, and wielding it with remarkable skill managed to light a fire just outside the tent door. This woman told us that her husband had not been well for some time, and that later in the season she was going to take him down to a Norwegian village and try feeding him with bread. We gathered that the Lapp dietary, except for the sugar

and the coffee, which they buy, is entirely the product of the reindeer—meat, milk and cheese—and that they use no farinaceous food at all.

Soon the time came for the reindeer to be milked. Our hostess picked up the baby, put it into a cradle shaped exactly like a pointed wooden shoe; the baby's feet in the toe part, and its little head at the other end. There was a thick soft fur binding to protect the baby's neck. This cradle she picked up and slung on to her back, the older child meantime driving the reindeer along. The mother took a small wooden bowl, and, kneeling down, she milked the reindeer, soon getting up and going on to the next one, as each animal gave but a small amount. All this time the creatures were passing and re-passing, and we marvelled that their great spreading antlers did not touch the baby's face; but this never happened and the baby was perfectly composed, even when the mother began to run, as she sometimes did, and the little head went bobbing against the thick fur collar. When the milking was over we began to say goodbye, and we felt we would like to give little presents of some kind in return for the hospitality. I had a ribbon belt, a scarf, and a little brooch, so I gave the scarf to the younger woman, the belt to the girl with the red cap, and the brooch to the small child who had lit the fire. As we made our way downhill again, I wondered if ever before a Liberty scarf had found its way into a Lapp encampment. This trip was one of the last we made before we left Svenningdal.

When the time drew near for us to leave, Petra, our housemaid, said I must positively spend a night at her parents' farm, and Karl also said I must call at his cottage to see his wife and children. Karl was a fine fellow, liked by the other men, and by all of us. He was active and well built and seemed to be exceptionally strong. It happened once that Mr. X., his younger daughter, and I were in the boat returning from fishing, and that Karl and Elias were rowing. There was rather a strong wind against us; presently Mr. X., who spoke good Norwegian, told Karl he should row faster. Karl replied quietly that the wind was holding the boat back a little. Mr. X. continued to complain and to tell Karl he was lazy and not trying to pull properly. Karl

flushed but made no answer. Several times on the homeward journey Mr. X. spoke to Karl in a way that made me feel ashamed, and I was thankful when we reached the house. That evening I went into the kitchen and told Karl how distressed and ashamed I had been to hear the way in which Mr. X. spoke to him, and that I hoped he did not think that English gentlemen generally behaved like that. I told Karl that if it was any comfort to him to know it, Mr. X. had on several occasions spoken very rudely to me. Karl then said with complete dignity, that he was not troubling about the matter, and he added: "It is a great disadvantage to a man not to have a good education, or to be taught proper behaviour. I have been fortunate in having a good education, but perhaps Mr. X. has not been so fortunate."

Before we left the house, Herbert and Mr. X. decided to give a party. There was a splendid big room, and in every way the house was suited for party giving. We made inquiries as to what would be popular in the way of refreshments and were told, sandwiches of eggs and anchovies; also sweet biscuits and coffee, and especially hot brandy and water, weak and very sweet. Also that dancing was the favourite way to spend the evening. We had no piano, but we understood the people liked to dance to a portativ. This was a hand organ standing on one leg, like those which in former years were played by Italians in the London streets. It appeared that there was a man down the river who had a portativ, and who would come to play it.

When the evening came, a good proportion of our guests arrived before the appointed hour, but we were prepared for this. I think it often happens in Norway. The night was very wet, but that did not affect our numbers. Most of them, including the man with the portativ, came by boat; some walked over the hill, and nearly everybody arrived with their boots soaking wet. This, however, did not seem to worry them, and certainly did not interfere with their dancing, for they danced extremely well. Most of the Norwegian folk dances have mainly jumping steps and practically no sliding ones, so damp boots don't matter. Some of the steps I had never seen before and there was one, so skilful, and with such quick turns, that I know I couldn't have

done it. The best dancer in the room was our stalwart Karl, and when he had our cook, Thora, as his partner, they were a most inspiring sight. I really wondered, as I watched, whether perhaps wet boots were a help to dancers. We of the home party danced with our guests but realised that our standard of dancing was decidedly lower than theirs. Refreshments were handed round at intervals. Herbert and I carried copper kettles filled with the hot drink. Thora brewed it for us and said it was exactly as people liked it, but to us it seemed rather mawkish, weak and very sweet. But, as it was not strong, of course we could fill the glasses again and again. The party went on for ages, and finally our guests went away in the dark night, either in their boats or over the hill, and they were evidently extremely happy and grateful. I am not sure that a party had ever been given in that house before.

Yet another offer of hospitality was extended to me. Old Sophie, who lived at the ferry on the river about a mile below our house, said I must without fail come and have a meal with her before leaving. So it was finally settled that the rest of the party should all go on ahead and that I should start a day or two later and travel with Petra and the cook. Our first stop was at the ferry. Sophie was a remarkable old lady: her husband was a quiet man who took the ferry boat back and forth across the river, and also cultivated a bit of land. In summer time Sophie worked on the land as well, but in winter her main interest was in shooting bears. She had a number of medals and prizes in her house commemorating her skill. As soon as I arrived, she showed me her medals and her guns, and then she said: "I have prepared a special Norwegian dish for you, which you will not have tasted before." This sounded interesting, but when the dish appeared, it was far from attractive. An old Paysandu tongue tin, with coloured labels still adhering to it, was placed before me. It contained some sour milk which must have been in the tin several days, for it had mould growing on it; however, she also handed me a cup of black coffee, which helped considerably. I spooned out some milk from the centre, avoiding the sides of the tin and also, as far as I was able, avoiding the mould. I must admit that beyond being extra acid there was no bad taste in this queer

milk and the coffee helped me to get it down. I told Sophie I could not venture to eat more than a little of anything as we had to go a long journey in carioles. She accepted this excuse but was a little disappointed.

Our next stop was at Karl's home, where his wife gave us coffee. Late in the evening we reached the farm where Petra's parents lived. It was a large house by a great waterfall. They had supper set out on the table, and I heard again, from Petra's mother, the fateful words: "I have prepared a special Norwegian dish for you." This time it was hot, and served to us in nice clean soup plates, but it had rather an odd smell. It appeared to consist of two layers, clear yellow liquid above and a sort of whitish porridge below. The taste of this stuff was most unpleasing. I learnt afterwards it was sour cream and flour boiled together; anyhow the underlying porridge tasted both acid and odd, and the top layer was like butter rather gone off and then melted. Thank heaven, dishes of powdered sugar and ground cinnamon were served with it, and by dint of piling cinnamon on to it, I was able to swallow a certain amount. Before very long, we went to bed and I woke up feeling quite all right next morning, in spite of all the strange things that good manners and the honour of my country had obliged me to consume the day before. On these occasions, I feel it ought to be possible to give some sort of gold medal to one's inside for being so wonderfully accommodating. The next day brought us to Mosjoen, where we found the rest of the party, and set out for England.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Development of life at Lacock – Visit to South Africa

AFTER the holiday in Norway I found it much easier to pick up life at Lacock, although it was impossible not to go on missing Aunt Rosamond. Our Methuen neighbours were a wonderful help. They realised that it was difficult for me, at my age, to live *tête-à-tête* with an elderly, rather nervous, and exceptionally reserved man, who moreover was not by any means always inclined to invite, or even admit, visitors to his house, though at times he could be very hospitable. I remember a young London journalist once wrote to him, out of the blue, and asked some question about a historical matter connected with Lacock. My uncle at once replied by asking him to come and stay; and he was with us for nearly a week.

Uncle Charles was very considerate about animals; if he saw a cow and thought it was ill, he would take any trouble to find the farmer or some man and have the creature attended to. Though rather shy with children, he was kind to them also and always wanted them to be properly treated. Once he and I went to look at something in a wood, and when we were coming back he found the gate leading into the field left open, and was rather annoyed. He firmly shut it, but a little later, when we were half across the field, he suddenly said: "Perhaps a child has gone into the wood, and it may not be able to get out now the gate is shut. I'd better go back and open it again," which he did.

Uncle Charles realised, I think, what good neighbours Lord and Lady Methuen were, and what a difference they made in my life. It seems to me, looking back to that time, that there was hardly a weekend when I was not asked over to some meal at Corsham, or that they did not come over to Lacock. These meetings used to be like pages of gold and colour in a rather monotonous black and white book of life. Sometimes I walked

over on a Sunday afternoon to tea at Corsham Court, stayed on for Evening Service in the Church, and came back to dinner with them afterwards. Lord Methuen would sometimes drive me back to Lacock in the pony cart and tell me all sorts of interesting things about his experiences. If by any chance my host couldn't take me back, our good coachman, Bird, was always ready to come and fetch me Sunday or weekday. It was generally rather too late for me to walk back by myself. I think the family at Corsham were kinder than ever that summer, knowing how much I must miss the companionship of Aunt Rosamond, and they made more difference to me than they ever realised.

Next summer they celebrated the coming of age of their eldest son. My uncle consented to our putting up two of the guests. One of these boys, he was only eighteen I think, was very sleepy after two successive evenings of dancing, and on the morning of his departure, we had a job to get him off in time to catch his train. It happened that we had a German parlourmaid called Clara, who had been a maid at Eton before she came to us. I sent her to deal with the situation, and she somehow got him dressed and packed and into the carriage, so that he just caught the train, which was fortunately late. Clara was tired but philosophic: "I know zeese boys," she said, "all must run and labour for them, while they themself remain calm." Next moment she cried: "The cat also!" and ran into the dining-room where indeed, our Persian cat had profited by the general preoccupation to jump on to the side table and start on the ham.

It was soon after we had celebrated Paul's coming of age in September, 1907, that we heard the whole Methuen family would be leaving Corsham for some years, as the Field Marshal had been appointed Commander-in-Chief in South Africa. I realised at once what a big difference this was going to make in my life: they had always been such wonderful neighbours. But in the meantime it was good that they were still there, and I went over to Corsham just as often as I could. Uncle Charles did not seem to mind; he had got used to my going to see them and he asked me questions about them and was really interested in what they were all doing. When Christmas Day came round, I was asked to

dinner at Corsham and that fitted very well, because Uncle Charles always had his turkey and plum pudding at midday. As we sat round the table at Corsham, just the family party and me, I felt a little sad, wondering what the next Christmas would be like, when I should still be at Lacock, and they would all be in South Africa. But, half way through dinner, the Field Marshal turned to me and said: "You must come out to South Africa and have next Christmas with us there." It sounded wildly impossible, but at the same time so delightful, that I felt at once it must somehow be made to come true, and everything began to feel rosy again. When I told my mother, who was in Scotland, what a wonderful invitation I had had, she wrote back at once saying I must go; it was the chance of a lifetime, and she promised she would come and stay with Uncle Charles while I was away.

As soon as I knew I should probably be going to South Africa I wanted to learn some Dutch. I knew it wasn't quite the same as Afrikaans, but I thought it would be a help. Next time I was in London I bought a shilling phrase book and sat studying it on a bench in St. Paul's Churchyard. The book was fairly clear, but it didn't seem to meet the case altogether. I wished I could get hold of a teacher. Then I remembered there was a Dutch Church in Austin Friars, not far off. I went along and saw that very beautiful church for the first time; inside, there didn't seem to be anybody, but at last I found a verger and asked him if he knew any lady of the congregation who might be willing to give me some lessons in Dutch. He did know one and gave me her address, so I wrote and we were able to fix it up in a couple of days. She helped me very much.

My friends and relations provided me with the most amusing "loan collection" of clothes. They all lent me their best summer garments to wear in South Africa as they could not possibly need them between November and May. All sorts of useful things, besides clothes, came to me from friends. Many were lent, but many also were given, so that when the time came to leave I was thoroughly well equipped. Oddly enough, we actually started from the tiny station of Lacock Halt, as all my heavy baggage had gone ahead and I only needed a few things for the night we were

spending at Southampton. My mother stayed with Uncle Charles, and Grace, with our neighbour Miss Fanny Awdry, came down to Southampton with me. It was very nice having the last evening together, and when we went on board next morning, I was very happy and excited, though I didn't like the feeling of being away from Grace so long. She, I expect, felt this very much also, but we knew we could write to each other and Grace was always the best of correspondents. I was glad, too, that she would not be going back from Southampton alone. Fanny Awdry had been a friend of our family as long as we could remember, and we always felt at home with her.

My ship was the *Gascon*, one of the Union Castle intermediates, which was not so swift as the mail steamers and did not call at Madeira but at other ports. I had chosen this one specially, because she was not only calling at Grand Canary but also at Ascension and Saint Helena, places I wanted very much to see. I was under the chaperonage of the captain, a kindly man from Devonshire, who was much liked by his officers and who made the voyage pleasant for all of us. The ship was not full so I had a two-berth cabin to myself.

As the days went by it was a joy to feel the air growing warmer and warmer, and one day we got up to find the stewards wearing white uniforms, and the sofas and chairs all covered with fresh, cool chintz. Grand Canary was not interesting, at least what we saw of it; but we only had time to have a cup of coffee ashore and a very brief walk before we were summoned on board again. In the ship I made friends with a pleasant, middle-aged woman who came to meals with us in the first class, but was actually in charge of a contingent of girl emigrants, who were in the forward part of the ship. She asked me to come and play games with her girls, which I enjoyed very much. They were Londoners and very friendly. The other first class passengers were mostly bridge players and rather dull, so I was glad to escape to the emigrants. However, there was one interesting lady, whose home was near Cape Town, and she helped me with Dutch. I had brought a Dutch dictionary with me, and also a big Dutch Bible which I had found at Lacock. We sat together on the deck and I tried to

talk, and she read to me. The captain was highly amused, when he found us reading the Psalms, verse about, in Dutch, but she really was a good help.

One day the captain called us and showed us a distant point to the southward; he told us this was Ascension and we felt much excited. When we got there it was extremely hot, as we lay at anchor and watched strange fish swimming round and round us in the clear water. They were like big bream, covered with scales of a dark umber colour with a few spots of bright turquoise blue. We threw bread rolls at them and they immediately started a football match. The rolls were so dry that they bounced about on the surface of the water and the fish dashed after them, hitting them this way and that, but never seemed able to bite them. A sailor caught one fish and put it into a pail of water; he warned us not to touch it as they bite very hard; also he said they were poisonous fish and not fit for food. I begged the captain to let some of us go ashore. He at first refused, but later kindly gave in, and the small company of naval officers on the island were very glad to see us, especially as we brought them a good bundle of papers and magazines. It was exceedingly hot; I could feel the heat of the rocks through my thin shoes, when we stepped ashore. There seemed to be no seaweed or shells or sand, just bare hot rock. I did get one little shell which was very pretty, all white, except for a single crimson blotch. I suppose it must have been blown on to the rocks in a gale.

The naval officers took us to their club, where we gratefully drank lime juice, and then they showed us their turtle ponds, where the big fellows were moving lazily about in the cloudy water. In ancient days, we were told, every ship that called at Ascension had to leave a sackful of earth there. But wonderful things had been done as the years went on. High up on the very top of the island they had made a dew pond, and from this beginning they had by degrees managed to grow vegetables and even bananas. We were shown photographs of the most luxurious vegetation on what had once been barren rock. It would have been a pleasure to have stayed longer and heard rather more of what was being done and planned on this lonely island, but we were

summoned back to our ship. Down by the harbour a number of the petty officers' wives with their children were sitting in the shade. I asked them if they did not find Ascension a very dull station, but they said no, it was quite a good station, the men could save their money. Indeed it was difficult to see what they could find there on which to spend money.

Our next stop was at St. Helena, and here we had a good eight hours instead of the half-hour or so we were allowed at Ascension. As we came up to the landing place at Georgetown, there was a crowd of people on the quay, with faces in varying shades of colour, some quite dark and some nearly white. It seemed strange to hear all these people talking to one another in English and to realise they spoke no other language. They were descendants of slaves, belonging to various native tribes, who had accompanied the first white settlers to the island many years ago. We were offered for sale little necklaces made from seeds of different colours, which were quite attractive and well worth the small sums that were asked for them. The narrow little harbour was flanked by steeply rising ground and a single road went from it, up and up the hill. I had a piece of luck here, for a party of three people on the ship, father, mother and daughter, had hired a carriage to drive them up to Longwood at the top of the island and they very kindly asked me to come with them. I had never realised the height of the island; down by the harbour the vegetation was sub-tropical; as we climbed slowly, we reached bushes and flowers like those which grow on the French Riviera; higher still the vegetation changed again, and when we reached Longwood we might have been in Scotland. There were fir trees, gorse and bramble bushes, with barley growing in the fields. The thought of Napoleon's sojourn there—his ill health and his thwarted ambitions—was very sad; but for anyone in happier circumstances, Longwood would have been a healthy and delightful place in which to live. On our way we passed a beautiful country house, standing among fine trees, and were told it was the headquarters of the Eastern Telegraph Company. At another point we stopped the carriage and went to look at the tomb where Bonaparte's body was first laid, and where it remained until it was

removed to Paris. There were a few little everlasting flowers—what the French call immortelles—growing there, and I picked some to take back to old Henriette Sanit. Before I left England I told her our steamer would be calling at St. Helena, and she said: "Vous allez donc voir ce pauvre malheureux!" So I felt the least I could do was to take her a few flowers from the place which had been his tomb for so long. We heard that the population was increasing on St. Helena and that it was a problem to find out how the inhabitants could support themselves. A scheme was then on foot to start a lace-making industry among the women, but I never heard whether it was successful.

After leaving St. Helena, our thoughts were pretty constantly fixed on South Africa, and we had a brilliant sunny morning for our arrival. I came up on deck and at first sight was puzzled, because I saw an island all green and grassy but nothing else. Then I turned to the other side of the deck, and there were the white houses of Cape Town nestling among the trees, and behind them the splendid shape of Table Mountain, dazzling clear against a blue sky, with never a wisp of cloud, let alone the famous "table-cloth"; it was unforgettable. We came ashore and passed through the customs, rather a long, weary job in an uncommonly hot shed, and after that a message came from Lady Methuen asking me to stay aboard the ship for that night and take the train for Pretoria the next morning. So there was time to see a little of the town, which used to be called "The Tavern of the Southern Seas." I went with a couple of ladies from the ship and looked at "Groote Schuur," the house where Cecil Rhodes formerly lived, and went up Adderley Street, where the dark-skinned flower sellers were sitting behind masses of lovely flowers I had never seen in my life before. It was very hot, so when we were tired of walking we had a rest at the Y.W.C.A. Lodge, and then I went back to the ship.

Our captain wanted to see the captain of the *Kenilworth Castle*, which was then lying at Cape Town; so he took me with him and I found it quite interesting to listen to their talk. Next morning he took me to the station, and I was interested to notice how many of the employees of the railway spoke with Lowland

Scotch accents. I found it hard to believe, while I was in the station, that I was really on South African soil. But that was only for the moment, and then the captain put me into my carriage with a basket of strawberries and lots of papers, and I found some very pleasant fellow passengers who were ready to explain everything to me. When the train began to move I felt very much excited, the country seemed to rise by stages higher and higher and everything was so new: the sharp square outlines of mountains on the horizon, the colouring of the trees and of the land itself. A good part of the time I stood on the observation platform at the end of the coach, and once, when we were going over a great stretch of open veld, I saw an ostrich legging along against the skyline. But I grew tired, and when the quick twilight came down I was glad to go to sleep.

Next morning, when I looked out of the window, I saw more new things, black widow birds flapping their wings and an old lady wearing a large white kapje, which also flapped in the wind. We reached Johannesburg about 12 o'clock, and there we changed trains. The stationmaster came to our carriage and said Lady Methuen had told him to meet me: he asked if I would like to go for a drive around the town, and if I would like some tea. It was blazing hot, so I gratefully accepted the tea, and sat talking to him in a cool room in the station, for I had a bit of a headache and did not feel inclined to go out into the baking hot streets. The train got into Pretoria at about 2.30 p.m., and the sunshine was so bright I was dazzled an dcould hardly recognise Lady Methuen's sister, Blanche, and the other friends who were on the platform to meet me. But it was very nice to see them all again and to come into a cool, roomy house, and to have a lovely bath, tea and a rest. As it happened, there was a dinner party that night and I almost felt as if I were back at Corsham, for not only the family, but the butler and several other members of the household were all friends of mine. Besides the Field Marshal and Lady Methuen, we had her sister, Blanche Sanford, and three other members of the family, Kitty aged nineteen, Seymour aged fourteen, and Lawrence, I think, eleven. Paul and Anthony were not with us, as they were in England. There was also the Field

Marshal's Chief of Staff, General Aston, a couple of A.D.C.'s, Seymour's governess, and Lawrence's tutor; so we were a big party, even when there were no guests.

It did not take long to pick up the threads of all that had happened since we last met, and almost at once we began to discuss plans for Christmas. We decided to act a little play in the house and have a Christmas tree. Also to give a big entertainment for the men in the recreation room of the camp, and to invite everybody. So, after that, we were as busy as bees all through the holidays. It seemed funny to be so hot at Christmas time and nevertheless to eat the traditional Christmas dinner, but I don't think any of us minded the heat; I know I didn't. We played games, and every evening we danced, taking turns to play the piano. Sometimes Kitty played on her 'cello or Seymour on her violin, and once we all, including the Field Marshal, sat on the floor and played Hunt-the-slipper. But this last performance made us really feel too hot and we gave it up. I found it difficult to get used to the brief and sudden twilight, it seemed at first an ominous sort of thing; but it was lovely to go out into the garden after darkness fell and see the big cactus trees loaded with pure white flowers, shining in the moonlight. I was puzzled on the first evening by two strange whitish clouds in the night sky which never seemed to move and looked like pieces of the Milky Way, until somebody told me they were the big nebulae. I was somewhat disappointed with the Southern Cross; I think everybody is.

We had a terrific thunderstorm the day after Christmas. I was sitting alone in the schoolroom about 11 o'clock in the morning, writing a letter. I had the windows all open, the air was quite still and it was very hot. Suddenly it seemed as though the whole room was full of flame, and at the same instant there was a terrific peal of thunder. I ran out of the room and met the governess in the passage, very white and frightened. We could hear howls from the dogs, who had run into the house for shelter. Our telephone had been struck, but nothing had taken fire. There was no more lightning and no more thunder, but after a few moments rain came down in torrents. It rushed down the roads into Pretoria, and though it was practically midday five people in the

town were drowned before they could reach shelter. Next morning when we drove out, the road was like the bed of a dry river, and we had to go very slowly.

That was the only thunderstorm I experienced in the Transvaal, but one day we had a very bad dust storm. We had been at the zoo in Pretoria, and a very beautiful zoo it is; all the lions and tigers looked so handsome, relaxed and comfortable in the warm climate. We were just thinking of leaving when the sky grew dark and windy, and we realised a dust storm was coming up. We started at once and our coachman was very good but it was only possible to see a very short distance ahead, and to manage horses in the whirling dust was a tricky business. At one moment, we only pulled up just in time to avoid a terrified group of mules which came stampeding past us at right angles. We luckily had only about three miles to go and reached home safely, but the fine red dust had worked its way through every bit of our clothing, and we only finally got rid of it in our baths.

Another day, when we were in the garden at home, a different sort of dark cloud came into the sky, and this time it was locusts. Everybody was called out to help and soon all of us, white or coloured, were beating on tin trays, or any imaginable thing we could find, to make a noise and hinder the creatures from settling. As a matter of fact, the swarm did not settle, but continued to fly high, making the whole place incredibly dark, but a great many of the insects fell down on to the ground, either dead, or too weak to fly on with the others. These dying creatures had a very unpleasant smell. I think all the bodies were finally swept up and buried, and the main thing was that no mischief had been done to the garden.

We were only about six weeks altogether in the Transvaal, and the time went by very quickly. Blanche Sanford was as fond as I was of going about the country on any excuse. The Field Marshal wanted a message taken to some Boers who lived a good many miles away, in what I think is called the Backveld, so we said we would like to take it. We knew that if any kind of refreshment was offered to us, we must accept it whatever it might be. I had heard that the Backveld Boers were very primitive and

kept all their store of food under their beds, so I thought we might find politeness rather difficult; but I didn't pass on this information to Blanche. We had a long, hot drive over rather bare open veld and we let the horses take it quietly. Finally we reached the home of Philippus Jacobus Botha. It was a large hut with a wide shady verandah and we were welcomed in, out of the hot sunshine, by Philippus and his wife, a fine couple, surrounded by half a dozen children, all strong, healthy and deeply sunburnt. It was very pleasant to sit down in the comparative coolness, and hardly had we done so when Mrs. Philippus dived under the bed. I wondered what on earth she would bring out, and how we should be able to eat it in that heat, but to my joy she produced a big melon. What a relief! Nothing could have been more acceptable after our hot drive and we thoroughly enjoyed the broad, cool slices. As we laid down the pieces of rind on the table —there were no plates—they were seized by the children, who joyfully crunched them up. This was my only experience of a Backveld Boer's home and it was a pleasant one; the whole family seemed so happy and healthy, and, moreover, glad to welcome visitors.

One day we all went to the Cullinan Mine, where the great diamond had been found. It did not seem to me like a mine, for it was—at that time, at any rate—an open quarry, baking in the strong sunshine. We were young enough, most of us, to wonder if the people who showed us over would perhaps offer us a small diamond as a souvenir, but I need hardly say this did not happen. We were very grateful to be asked to lunch at the manager's house, in a large, cool room, with plates of delicious fruit. Another time, two of us were taken for a trip down the Robinson Mine at Johannesburg. First, we had lunch with Sir Joseph Robinson, who told us about his experiences in the Jameson Raid and elsewhere. Then he passed us on to another man who showed us all the processes, beginning with the great crushers or stamps which crushed the quartz, until the final extraction of the gold. We went down the mine—which was indeed a mine this time, and a very deep one—on a sort of trolley, on which we lay sideways, and travelled slowly down a slanting shaft, crouch-

ing down flat, for the rock roof seemed very close to our heads. We had a couple of engineers with us and also a Frenchman with his wife. The lady was rather frightened, as well as being oppressed by the very hot atmosphere. When we reached the bottom of the shaft, where it seemed hotter than ever, and she saw flickering lights shining on the dark, perspiring bodies of the natives, she cried: "Mais c'est l'enfer!" and her husband had a job to reassure her.

But soon the rains began, and what had been red dust settled down into rose-coloured mud, of the consistency of cream, and it was not easy to get about. This was a bad time, too, for the animals. The horses were liable to something called "horse sickness" and the cattle to "rinderpest," and it seemed as though there was danger to the creatures everywhere. It was not a good time for human beings either, and Lady Methuen had planned to take her children and the rest of us down to Constantia, near Wynberg in the Cape Province. Only the Field Marshal and his staff stayed at Headquarters House; the rest of us all travelled south.

At that time of the year there is no rainy season in the Cape Colony, just lovely autumn weather, so everything was looking beautiful. The house we went to live in had a very good garden and there was a grove of lovely silver trees quite near. All about us were the vineyards, from which Wynberg takes its name. There was an amusing tree, quite close to the house, which had a little platform fixed in it and a staircase leading up to it from the ground, and we used to have tea parties up there "for the children," which meant Seymour and Lawrence, but Kitty loved being up there and so did I. The Field Marshal used to come down for a day or two as often as he could. Instead of the definitely Service entourage of Headquarters House we had a number of neighbours at Constantia, many of them belonging to old Dutch families and very charming. They were all most hospitable and welcoming. One lady asked me to her home (she was the one who used to read the Dutch Psalms with me, verse about, on board the *Gascon*), and we had an excellent lunch, all composed of traditional Cape Colony dishes followed by marvellous fruit. Late

in the afternoon, when she brought us back from a walk, we all went into the dining-room, and there on the floor was the half of a huge water melon. It was a lovely thing, with its dark green rind, its rose pink flesh with a half transparent icelike, crystalline look and its big black seeds. Moreover, it was the biggest melon I had ever beheld. We all sat round it on the floor and dug out pieces of the pink stuff until we could eat no more. A water melon has very little flavour of its own, but it is most refreshing.

Constantia is only four miles from Wynberg, and the road, made of dry red earth along which you can walk almost noiselessly, is shaded by trees practically all the way, so it is very pleasant going, especially in fresh autumn weather. One day, I had driven out with the others soon after lunch and told them I would walk back later. I did some shopping in Wynberg, had a cup of tea, and then started for home. To my dismay, down came the twilight, not as quickly as it did in the Transvaal, but all the same much too quickly for me, as I had still three miles to go, and I knew it would not be right to walk along that road alone in the dark. I was furious with myself for not starting earlier, but felt that probably the only thing I could now do was to go back into Wynberg and hire a carriage. I was just going to turn round when I heard wheels, and along came a dogcart with one of the party from Constantia. They had guessed I might get caught in the dark and had come along to fetch me. It was a great relief, and a lesson also.

I didn't want to forget my Dutch and there had been little chance for practice at Headquarters House. So I was glad to go down to Plumstead to a charming old lady, one Miss Bonnie Cloete, whom the Methuens had known for years, and have a chat with her. She was very intellectual and most amusing. Her English was vigorous, if at times a little original, and often she spoke alternate sentences in English and Dutch. She had some lovely old furniture and china, brought from the house at High Constantia where her family used to live in the old spacious days. Now it had been taken over by the South African Government and was in fact a wine farm, but the house itself and the furniture

remaining in it were being well cared for. Miss Cloete shook her head sadly, and said: "Ah, my dear, if you had been able to visit us there, we would have made you so welcome: we had a number of nice slaves!" It seemed strange to think of this kindly old lady speaking of her slaves, but I feel sure she must have been very good to them. Among the treasures Miss Cloete had brought away from her old home was a gilded workbox, I imagine rather over one hundred years old, very beautifully made with delicate little fittings, all gilded. Under the actual base of the workbox was what looked like a little drawer, but it did not open. She turned a handle and it proved to be a tiny musical box, playing long forgotten little tinkling melodies. Miss Cloete told us that in the old and dangerous days, when all the men were out and the young wives had to stay at home with their needlework, they often felt anxious if their husbands were slow to return, and they would start a little tune in the gilded workbox to comfort them in their anxiety. We seemed to see the whole picture when Miss Cloete was talking to us.

There were other friends, too, among them a pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church and his wife. I asked Lady Methuen if I might sometimes attend that church. I understood enough Dutch to follow the service, and so many things reminded me of the Church of Scotland that I enjoyed being there. Some of the Psalm tunes were exactly the same as ours. The pastor's wife was arranging an out-of-door fête to raise money for the church, and she asked me if I would come and help to sell things at it. I can't remember now exactly what I did at the fête, but it was all very pleasant in that lovely autumn weather. I think I sold little buns called "Mostbolleties," and I watched people making "Sasaties" at open fires and doing many other unfamiliar things. A great deal of the fête seemed to consist in making and selling things to eat and drink; but everything looked beautiful under the shade of the great trees, and I felt very proud when Lady Methuen and her party came along during the afternoon, and I was able to receive them as part of the management.

We had some lovely expeditions, too; Lady Methuen's sister, Blanche, took me with her to Ceres, where there was a big

ostrich farm. We spent the first night at Worcester, and on the way there we saw an unusual sight: native women pouring something from big pink and white blossoms which bloomed on plants looking rather like proteas. There was a little syrupy juice in the heart of each flower and the women tipped this juice into their pails, without picking the flowers. We were told they boiled up this sweet juice and used it like honey. Strange to say, we did did not see any bees disputing with them for the right to take it. The effect of the women's dark faces among the great pink and white blossoms was very striking. When we reached Ceres there were pomegranate trees in fruit all along the sides of the street, and very handsome they looked, though unluckily a good deal of dust was blowing about and settling on the pretty scarlet berries that showed through cracks in the fruit. We drove to the ostrich farm and found a large family of the name of Malherbes, father, mother, one daughter and five handsome sons, aged from sixteen to twenty-four. They made us welcome and took us over the farm. In the distance we could see a number of ostriches, and Blanche and I waited while the others went off to drive them in. However, before the men returned, the ostriches began to run towards us of their own accord and at a very smart pace. I was a little frightened, for I thought they might be fierce. But they just raced along until they reached us, and then stopped, and began to cheep, rather like huge chickens. They were really young ones and quite quiet; old cock ostriches can be very fierce. After they had gone off again, Mr. Malherbes showed us his garden, gave us melons and brought us indoors for coffee. He did not speak any English, so we had to carry on in Dutch, luckily he seemed to understand me all right, and I tried to talk about obvious things like weather and mealies and ostriches. We heard, however, next day that Mr. Malherbes said to our driver: "You talk Dutch like us, but that lady, she talks like the Predikant," so I expect I must have picked up some biblical expressions from the old Dutch Bible we were reading on the ship.

Once we spent a couple of days at Simonstown with the Admiral and his wife. I thought Simonstown looked strangely like the North Italian Riviera.

Several times we walked up different spurs of Table Mountain, and once we rode donkeys and went right up to the top. In those days we all wore veils over our hats and I felt rather like a missionary. One morning I started with Lawrence's tutor to walk up a spur of the mountain, and we went past a place where the ground had been burnt and all the grass was charred black. Beyond that again the grass was green and we could hear snakes slithering about in it. We could not see them, only hear them. I think they must have been escaping from the fire and so there were more of them about than usual. When we got to a kloof I heard a sound like a dog barking, and my companion said: "I believe that's a baboon." He was more courageous than wise, for he wanted to go after it, armed only with his stick; but I thought that was a mad idea. I am very much afraid of baboons—there is something so vindictive about them. So I stoutly maintained that I was sure it was a dog come out from some farm, and he believed me and left it at that. We heard a strange story from Miss Cloete about baboons. Apparently they are able to count up to three, but not higher. In former days they used to come down from the mountains in great numbers at nightfall to plunder the crops, and they were extraordinarily well organised. They posted sentries at different points to give warning if any men appeared. Once, Miss Cloete told us, eight men armed with rifles hid in the tall stalks of the corn and waited for the baboons. Down came the creatures, but suspected there were men there and so stayed on the rocks watching. One man came out of the corn, then a second, then a third. After this the baboons decided that there could be no more, and came down in force. The five men remaining shot a great many of them, and the baboons that escaped seized on their sentries as they went up the rocks and tore them to pieces as a punishment for not giving warning. The Kaffirs think that when bad men die, their souls pass into baboons, and I don't wonder.

The heather on Table Mountain and the granite rocks make one think of Scotland, but all those lovely many-coloured heaths were never seen growing in the northern hemisphere; close beside the heather bushes, too, there were often waxy scarlet crassulas, looking as if they had grown in a greenhouse. Once we

climbed down a rather steep, narrow ravine with a stream of water rushing down it. There I saw a most beautiful kind of orchid—a dysa with large blossoms of rose colour shading into white. These dysas grew on both sides of the waterfall and the spray kept falling on their lovely nodding heads. I believe that variety will only grow in that particular spot.

While we were at Constantia we made the acquaintance of penguins' eggs; some friends sent us a basket of them and told us to boil them hard, like plovers' eggs. I thought they might taste fishy, but strange to say, they had no taste of fish whatever and were really very like plovers' eggs and very good. As it was close to Easter we decided we would have penguins' eggs for our Easter eggs. After boiling them hard I painted pictures on them of the various lovely Cape flowers we had seen, and this was easy because Lady Methuen had a flower book with coloured illustrations. It seems a remarkable thing that a bird living entirely on fish should be able to lay eggs that aren't fishy.

Soon after Easter it was time for me to go back to England, and I didn't want to go at all. Miss Cloete said to me: "The Cape is like an octopus [she pronounced it 'Octohpus']—it will draw you back again." But I think the old proverb, "Who drinks of the waters of Africa will return to drink of them again," is a more attractive expression of the same idea. Blanche Sanford and I planned to sail home together and we had a busy time collecting presents to take back. Ostrich eggs, silver leaves (I also had a beautiful cone from a silver tree), shells, beads, dried fruit, and a little jar of pickles containing tiny maize cobs, which looked for all the world like lizards' tails. Our packing took us quite a while.

We travelled home in the *Goorkha*, which was a sister ship to the *Gascon*, in which I had come out. Teneriffe was our only port of call, but we had about eight hours ashore on that beautiful island. There was a tramcar which took us up a long hill from which we had lovely views. The native women wore very small, round, rather unbecoming straw hats, and some of them were riding on camels. There was an attractive market, where I remember buying some long scarves of cream-coloured lace which were highly popular as presents when I got home. As we

steamed away from Teneriffe, we had a clear view of the snowy peak. The last part of the voyage was dull and rather cold, and I think most of the passengers were restless and anxious to get home as quickly as they could. It was very good when we at last got to Southampton to see Grace come on board: there seemed to be no end to the things I had to tell her, and I hardly knew where to begin.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Winter Sports in Switzerland – Cookery School in Paris – Journey to Lofoten Islands – Lacock Again

THE summer of 1911 was very hot and strangely oppressive, with frequent thunderstorms and continued sultry weather. One week it was exceptionally hot both by night and by day, and we all found it difficult to sleep. My poor uncle, who was a bad sleeper at any time, found it terribly trying and he was apt to talk much, during the day, about how hard he found it to sleep, and I think this reacted upon me also. I couldn't go away, because it would not have been right to leave him, and he himself did not feel he was strong enough to go anywhere for a change, even for a few days. One evening I went to bed feeling it was hardly possible to go on much longer, unless the weather broke. Then I fell asleep and had a most refreshing dream. I dreamt that I was walking with friends, I don't know who they were, along the top of some cliffs on the Forfarshire coast. There was a glorious breeze, and far below I could see the white waves breaking and the sea birds flying about. All that night I slept soundly and woke up feeling entirely refreshed. I had no doubt at all that there had been a heavy shower during the night, and that I had felt the cool air from it during my sleep. When the maid came in to call me, I asked her if there had been any rain. She answered: "Last night was worse than ever—it was the hottest night we've had yet; Edith and I couldn't sleep at all, we sat up by the window nearly all night." I was completely mystified. Where had I been? For I couldn't believe I had really stayed at Lacock during the night. At any rate, I was completely refreshed and rested and so was able to stick out for three or four days more. Then the weather broke and we really had rain and a change for the better.

That summer also Grace was not well. She had had a very

bad cold in Scotland and was left with a persistent sore throat that she couldn't shake off. On taking advice in London, she was recommended to go for a holiday to Switzerland and live in the open air. I gathered that the doctor wanted her to have as much mountain air as possible, and he implied that if care were not taken now, she might be heading for serious lung trouble, She and her friend, Isabel Maxwell, had planned to go and visit some of the old towns in Germany, but of course this idea was abandoned and Isabel agreed to take Grace to Switzerland instead. I stayed with Uncle Charles until our mother could come to take my place, and then I went out to the others in Switzerland. Grace was staying at a little village called Fionnay and she could go for easy walks, ride on a donkey, and also sketch a little; but she was very listless and took no real interest in anything. It seemed to me that she didn't care much whether she grew better or worse, and I didn't like this at all. Isabel had to go back to Scotland before long, so I stayed on with Grace.

It so happened that I got a letter from an old friend, Mrs. Gell, telling me that she and her children were settled at a village called Corbeyrier, above Aigle in the Rhône valley, and she had heard that Grace and I were in Switzerland not so very far off, and wouldn't we come and see her. The distance to Corbeyrier from Fionnay was not great, but being down one valley and up another, it involved a stop overnight. I talked the suggestion over with Grace. She was still rather listless and said she didn't mind staying by herself, if I wanted to go there for a few days, and that on the other hand she didn't mind going with me, if I wanted her to do so. I got the impression that she was a little tired of being at Fionnay, so we packed up our things and in due time reached Corbeyrier by the old diligence from Aigle.

There was no one else in the hotel except Mrs. Gell and her charming children, and she was delighted to have us with her, as her husband—an Army chaplain—had been sent to Alexandria. On our very first evening she said she wanted us to meet some interesting neighbours of hers, who were living in a chalet quite near our hotel. They came to dinner and this circumstance made an important difference in our lives. Before dinner Mrs. Gell

told us all about them. Mrs. Fricker's husband was in South Africa and far from well; their means had been greatly reduced, so they had come to Corbeyrier, where they could live inexpensively, and where the boys could attend school in Aigle and improve their French. There were five children, a girl of seventeen, a boy of fifteen, a boy of eleven, and twins of eight, a boy and girl. The eldest girl and her mother looked after the house and the cooking, and also taught the twins their lessons as far as there was time for this. The boy twin looked rather pale and fragile, but the others all seemed cheerful and strong, as well as being very thoughtful and helpful to their mother. Grace and I realised what a heavy burden she was carrying, in addition to her anxiety about her husband's health. A few days later Mrs. Fricker asked us to tea and on the following Sunday we lunched with her. I remember how cleverly everything was planned, economically but yet most hospitably, with everything beautifully cooked. They had a great deal to tell us about the animals in the place and the peasants who lived near, and the farm from which they got the milk, and the whey which was recommended for the boy twin.

When Grace came back with me to the hotel, I could see she had been greatly impressed and that her listlessness had nearly disappeared. We knew that we would have to go to Lausanne for a week or so as she was to have treatment from a throat specialist there, and that we should then return to England. Grace, however, suggested that we should come back to Corbeyrier for Christmas, and that we should take presents for everybody, especially the Frickers ("la famille Fricque," as the peasants used to call them), and that we should give a children's party for them in the hotel. This was the old Grace back again and my heart rejoiced. I think she suddenly got a sense both of proportion, and of relief, realising that other people were carrying very heavy burdens with courage and cheerfulness, and moreover that she herself could do something for them. The Lausanne doctor gave her a rather uncomfortable treatment for her throat which, however, certainly did good and he pronounced favourably on the state of her lungs, so we were much relieved. He

entirely approved of her returning to Switzerland for the winter and said she might toboggan and skate in moderation but she was not to ski or to bob-sleigh.

We travelled together as far as Paris. From there Grace went straight home, and I stayed for a few weeks in the G.F.S. Hostel in the Avenue de Jena, so as to attend the Cordon Bleu Cookery School in the Faubourg St. Honoré. I had heard of this school from the French chef who used to examine us in London, and I had long wanted to attend it. I bought what was called a *cachet de travail*, which cost a little more than the ordinary ticket and meant that, instead of just looking on at what the chef was doing, you could stand beside him and assist him, like a kitchen maid. There was no practice class at this school, so I was glad of the opportunity to see more closely how the chef worked. The pupils were nearly all professional cooks, men or women; the teachers were men and very good at their work, though not perhaps quite so good at the explaining part of it.

When I first went down to stand beside the chef, I was rather afraid he might get impatient and call me "a sacred pig," or even some more opprobrious epithet. But he was always courteous and most correct in his language; some of his own particular expressions, however, were difficult for a stranger to understand. When he wanted gravy colouring he asked me to hand him the "Jus de singe," and when he wanted water he said "Essence de canard." I thought I had better look like a working cook, so I wore no hat. (English women all wore hats in 1911.) I bought a useful grey apron in the Rue de Dunkerque and rolled up my sleeves, and this must have succeeded all right, because one of my fellow pupils asked me if I were paying for myself, or if my mistress was paying for me. I replied with truth that I was paying for myself. Of course I was pretty well used to talking French and familiar with French culinary expressions, which was a help. What I learnt at that school has been extremely useful to me. The chefs were so deeply interested in their work, and so enthusiastic about their dishes, that I found their spirit was infectious.

Our plan for returning to Corbeyrier was duly carried out,

and from the very start of that Christmas holiday Grace was most active. She helped the temporary English chaplain, who knew no French, to arrange his little chapel, got his electric light connected, asked Mrs. Fricker to play the harmonium, and her children to join us in forming a choir. Finally she secured a retired Civil Servant to read the lessons. All this she fixed up during the first afternoon after our arrival, while I was resting in the hotel. Later on she lent a hand with some tableaux, fixed up the children's party as arranged, and generally had a finger in every pie.

Soon after Christmas, a very charming guest arrived at the hotel, Stella Benson, who was accompanied by a pleasant elderly lady, a Miss Macleod. Stella used to call her "my undertaker," and indeed she undertook many responsibilities in caring for Stella, who was both delicate and imprudent, but one of the most charming creatures who ever lived. She was very musical and had begun to study singing in Germany, but caught diphtheria and lost her voice. She could not sing, but she would whistle to us, accompanying herself on a guitar. I can hear her now, whistling like a bird, high notes, low notes, soft notes, and merry notes. She used to sit on the stairs with her guitar and whistle, while the hotel maids collected at the kitchen door to listen to her. She drew well also and made admirable caricatures, and she could write a most entertaining letter. But there was often a look of deep sadness on her face, very likely from the grievous disappointment of losing her voice. She thoroughly shared our admiration for Mrs. Fricker and we were often all together. As yet Stella had not begun to write, but she had literary blood in her veins, her father was first cousin to the three Bensons, E. F., A. C., and R. H., and her mother was sister to Mary Cholmondeley, the author of *Red Pottage.*

From Corbeyrier Grace and I went to a place in the Vosges called Mont Soleil, where my brother-in-law, Edward Stewart, came to join us, and we all decided to go to Arosa in the Engadine. There we had some really good skating and the mountains were beautiful. Edward had to return home, but Grace and I planned to spend our last week at St. Moritz, a place I had always wished

there is the Aurora, lighting up all the sky, and with the white snow on the ground, it is very bright and cheerful." We wished it had been possible for us to come back and see all this. The only drawback they spoke of was that in the spring, when at last the sunlight came back, all their faces looked very pale.

Everywhere there was abundance of food; the people kept sheep and goats, small cattle and poultry, and all the creatures were very tame. If you patted a cow, she would twist her head round and try to lick your hand. They had sea fish and river fish, ptarmigan in the season, and the usual profusion of wild fruits. They also made their own liquors. Norway was under Prohibition Law, so one day, when we were being entertained at a farm, we were surprised to be offered small glasses of rhubarb wine. When I tasted this wine, it seemed to me very strong, and all our party felt the same, and we were shy of accepting a second glass. Our hostess told us with pride that it was home-made. "In fact," she said, "I make everything at home, including the beer we drink daily with our dinner." So that appeared to be their interpretation of prohibition; everything was permitted as long as you made it at home.

We had with us a delightful dog called Dick; he was a setter brought to help with the ptarmigan shooting, and was specially under the care of George, who let him sleep in his room. Once when George had to be away for a night he thought Dick might be lonesome and howl; so he asked if someone would take him into their room. Nobody wanted to, so I said I would. I put a rug in the corner of the floor and Dick settled down on it to sleep. However, when I woke up in the early morning, there was Dick stretched out full length on the counterpane beside me, with his head neatly laid on the pillow. When I told George, he said: "Oh, didn't you know? That dog always sleeps like a Christian."

It sounds very unlikely, but all the same it is true, that the warmest bathing I ever had in my life was in the Arctic Ocean. Fortunately, we had brought bathing things with us, though we hardly expected to use them. Our house was near a point where the river ran into the sea, and so was very good for sea trout fishing. The little estuary was broad and had a sandy bottom. In

5. THE BLUE PARLOUR, LACOCK ABBEY [*A. T. Schofield*

6. SOUTH GALLERY, LACOCK ABBEY [*A. T. Schofield*

[*Lambert & Lambert*

7. MATILDA TALBOT, 1908

[*Downey*

8. MATILDA TALBOT IN WREN UNIFORM

the summer the rays of the sun were striking on the water all day, and nearly all night, so that their warmth struck through to the sand underneath, at least that is what I imagined. At any rate, when we went down to bathe, even before breakfast, the water never felt cold, and we could lie and laze blissfully in it, though I don't believe there is any land between Lofoten and the North Pole. All the same, when we left in the middle of September, the sea was so cold I couldn't bear my hand in it and was glad to put on the warmest clothes I had, and to borrow a pair of waders to put on top of them. On one of the hottest days some of the party were finding life rather trying, for all the butter turned to oil, and the beer was quite warm. Some of us also found it hard to sleep without any darkness, and to pull down blinds or draw curtains only made the bedrooms hotter, so that wasn't much help. Luckily for me I could always sleep, in spite of the light. But we managed to do something about the butter and the beer. It seemed there was a place a few miles away where they made cod-liver oil in the winter, and that there might, perhaps, be some ice there so Walton Leaf and I took a boat and went. We were lucky, there was ice to be bought, and we put as much as ever we could get into the boat and rowed home with it. The beer was cooled, the butter was solidified and everybody was pleased. Moreover a day or two later the weather changed.

One of our party, Dr. Wynne Wilson, began to suffer very much from toothache: he had been too busy before leaving England to have an overhaul from his dentist and trouble started soon after he got to this outlandish place. It appeared that there was no dentist, even in Svolvaer, and that if he wanted to consult one, he would need to go back to the Norwegian mainland. So he decided to try to stick the discomfort. We inquired what the inhabitants of Foro did when they had toothache, and the reply was that they went to the local veterinary and had the tooth pulled out. Naturally, Dr. Wynne Wilson did not feel drawn to this solution of his problem and he hoped the toothache would cure itself. But it did not, so one day the poor patient said there was nothing for it but to go to the veterinary and have the tooth out. By this time, Walton Leaf's brother, Henry, had joined our

party, so he and I, who both knew more Norwegian than Wynne Wilson, arranged to take him along.

He was really very good about it. He walked between the two of us, like Christian walking between the two lions, as Henry afterwards said. I hardly knew what we should find, except that it certainly wouldn't be like any dentist's surgery that we had ever seen. Nor was it. We were shown into a room which had an ordinary bedroom chair with a small table near it; that was all. Then the vet. came in, a kindly enough looking man; but there appeared to be no water, no basin, nor anything that is usually to be found at a dentist's. I told the vet. what was wanted, and he asked me to show him which tooth was to be pulled out, and I did so. I then asked if he would give us a jug of water and a glass, and also a basin to spit into. He fetched the water and a glass, but I suppose there was no basin available, for he brought a clanking stable bucket, and dumped it down on the floor beside the chair in which poor Wynne Wilson was sitting, looking far from happy. An inspiration then came to me. I was rather afraid the vet. might be slow over his job and that Wynne Wilson, who was worn by suffering, might call out and then feel frightfully vexed at having squealed before a woman. So I told the vet. that all this gentleman's teeth stuck very fast in his head, in fact that the teeth of all his family stuck very fast in their heads, and that it would require an extremely strong pull to get this tooth out. The "dentist" nodded gravely and got to work and, thank heaven, the tooth came out in one, and Wynne Wilson made no sound. The relief was great for all three of us, and the two lions took Christian back again. Once at home, I felt that my duties were over and Rosie Leaf put the patient straight to bed, gave him suitable food and cosseted him. He was very grateful to us all, poor fellow.

There was a clever bootmaker on the island, a crippled man, who made excellent watertight boots, of horsehide dressed with porpoise oil. We were a gold mine to him; for everyone of our party, except Rosie, had a pair of these boots made. When Mr. Karslake wanted a pair, he asked me to come with him as he had no Norwegian. The old bootmaker was very funny over this. It

so happened that Mr. Karslake had a slight malformation on one ankle, very likely from an accident, though he was always perfectly active. The bootmaker was intrigued about this, and asked me whether Mr. Karslake had always been like that and whether it ran in his family. I replied that I could not possibly say. "But," said the man, "he is your relative." "No," I said, "he is not related to me at all." But the bootmaker shook his head and would not take no for an answer. He seemed to think also that I had persuaded all the party to order boots, because I very often came with them, and he was extremely grateful and wanted to charge me less for my boots than the others. He was very plucky and hardworking so I was indeed glad that our coming had brought him more business.

Before we left Foro, Herbert and Rosie gave the people a party. We hired "The Haunt of Youth," arranged about refreshments and had a programme of speeches, music and dancing. It all went excellently and the whole neighbourhood was invited. I think all Norwegian peasants dance well, and these people were certainly no exception. Some of their folk dances were amusing and very pretty, and they were most anxious to teach them to us. By this time, of course, the evenings were getting dark and Herbert had arranged to finish off the party by a display of fireworks which he had, with great trouble, brought from England. This proved something of an anti-climax, however, for the people just laughed in fits when they saw the fireworks go up. There were none of the "Ahs" and "Ohs" and cries of admiration and astonishment that we had expected, only shouts of amusement. Was it because they were remembering the auroras and shooting stars that gave them such wonderful displays during their long winter? I don't know, but Herbert said he wouldn't bring fireworks to the arctic regions again. When we finally got on board our little vessel, the farewells were most affectionate, and there were hospitable invitations to come back and stay with them in their homes, especially in the winter.

In our steamer there were two large cabins: Rosie Leaf and I shared one, and the four men of our party were in the other. Rosie's bunk was on the opposite side of the cabin from mine,

and under each bunk there was what appeared to be a sail locker. Some time after we had gone to bed the wind got up, and presently we heard an extraordinary noise, a sort of rattling and banging immediately under our bunks. I switched on a light and a few moments later, the front of the locker under Rosie's bunk burst open and out rolled a quantity of potatoes, Next, my locker also burst open, and from it, too, potatoes poured out. As the yacht rolled, so the potatoes from both sides travelled across the floor and became inextricably mixed. It was a very funny sight: we laughed till we cried, but sleep was impossible till we reached calmer water. When morning came, we picked our way across the potatoes and managed to dress.

Living at Lacock was getting easier and easier for me. The continued kindness of neighbours was wonderful, and Grace was able to come and stay at Lacock quite often. I was asked to give some cookery lectures in Bath; the audience was interested, and in consequence of this a lady who attended the lectures asked me to come and give some lessons at her home in Buckinghamshire. My mother promised to take my place at Lacock. The Buckinghamshire experience was rather fun. I was to take some private pupils in the mornings in the lady's own kitchen, and in the afternoons I was to give a series of six lectures in the village. All details of the lessons were arranged by letter and I duly arrived at a charming house and had a welcome from a particularly kind hostess. She explained to me that the village hall was not available for the afternoon lectures, but that the Congregational minister could let us have the use of the chapel schoolroom (as I understood) for the first three lectures, and that the next three would be held at the inn. That sounded fairly all right.

Next day my hostess sent me down to the village in good time with the oil stove, and all my other apparatus, and we stopped at the door of the chapel and inquired for the caretaker. A woman appeared and said that was quite correct, she was expecting me to come and give the lecture. I inquired where the schoolroom was. She replied that there was none. I then asked where the lectures were to be given. She said: "Here in the chapel." I was speechless. She said the minister did not mind at all, and that they

knew there was no other place where I could give them. It was a most uncompromising chapel, with a large pulpit upholstered in red velvet, a harmonium, many rows of seats and nothing else.

Something had to be done, so I dropped my hat and coat into the pulpit, where they could not be seen, spread a sheet over the harmonium and put my scales on it, and went out and collected some packing cases on which to stand the stove, the cooking materials and some other things. Seeing what a fix I was in the caretaker kindly lent me a table of her own. I lighted the stove, put on my cap and apron, and got things more or less ready by the time the audience began to assemble.

An old Yorkshire lady and her daughter sat in the front row, and I thought they looked rather shocked. Anyway, it seemed best to make some explanation; so I told them that the minister had kindly permitted the use of the chapel as there was no other place available, and asked them kindly to excuse it. After that we got to work. It was just an ordinary cookery demonstration: the saucepans bubbled, the frying pan hissed, and everything else went as usual. When it was over, I went up to the old Yorkshire lady and said I hoped she understood the position. She was most friendly, and said: "Well, when I first came in I was astonished and really felt as if I could not remain, but you had not been speaking for five minutes before I lost all sense of a place of worship." When we had held the three lessons in the chapel and adjourned to the inn for the remaining three there was a rather larger audience. My hostess told me that there was one lady, a very strict churchwoman, who said she would not permit her servants to enter a Nonconformist chapel under any pretext whatsoever, but she raised no objection to their entering a public house. On the whole this Buckinghamshire visit was a very pleasant one.

A week or two later, I went to Cambridge to give a course of demonstrations there in a very cosy and convenient little hall. Shortly before leaving Cambridge, I had a letter from my sister Grace telling me of her engagement to James Hay of Belton in East Lothian. This took me by surprise: I had never met him, and though I had always realised my very attractive young sister

would most likely marry, I was not exactly prepared for it just then. But she told me they would not be married until the following spring, so there was time for me to get used to the idea, though I knew I should miss very greatly her help and co-operation at Lacock.

Grace and I had one more winter holiday in Switzerland, this time going straight to St. Moritz, where we saw the most lovely exhibitions of skating; even the cold Maloja wind could not spoil our enjoyment. There was a Swedish professional who did fascinating solo dancing steps, and also an English girl, an amateur, whom I remember partly for her beautiful movements and partly for her very pretty clothes. She wore a wide-skirted dress of grey velvet, a little grey velvet cap, and a large spray of rose-pink carnations across her bodice which never seemed to be displaced by any of her swift movements.

After our lovely skating holiday, Grace decided to go with a girl friend through to Italy from the Engadine, while I went straight home. I found this could be done third class, if one did not mind spending a night in Basle. English people did not travel third class on the Continent much in those days, and some of our older fashioned fellow-guests wanted to lend me money so that I could travel second class. I explained I had enough money with me to change to second if I wanted to, but that I really wished to see what it was like in the third. I found the carriage had plain wooden seats, but was quite clean and comfortable. Leaving in the afternoon I reached Basle about 8 p.m. and on the platform I saw a lady in uniform, wearing a large silver badge with the letters that are equivalent to our 'Travellers' Aid Society. I asked her if there was any inexpensive hostel where I could stay the night; she said there was, and that if I would wait half an hour until the next train had come in, in case there was any girl on it who needed help, she would take me there herself. We waited, but no other girl appeared, so we walked along the frosty streets to a pleasant little house, where I secured a bedroom and asked the maid to call me at half-past six in the morning.

I fell sound asleep and it seemed a very short time indeed before I heard a raucous voice calling out: "Halb sieben," and I

had to get up. It was extremely cold, but when I got down to the sitting-room, it was nice and warm with a good stove. Hot coffee and milk were on the table, with slices of black bread, white rolls and butter. I had plenty of time for a good breakfast, and then asked if I could buy notepaper and envelopes to write a letter. They told me these were free. I settled a very modest bill, and walked along to the station, where I saw the usual crowds of people thronging into the buffet and felt very glad to be already so well warmed and fed. When I got to Paris, I was able to buy some pretty things for friends at home with the money saved on the journey.

Grace wanted me to make her wedding cake, as I had made our eldest sister's. I thought it would be a good idea this time to have some lessons in wedding-cake icing. I was lucky enough to have the help of Mr. William Fortt of Bath. When I asked him if he could give me a course of six lessons, he replied that he could not possibly, in only six lessons, teach me to ice a wedding cake properly. I then said I had promised to ice my sister's cake, and that I knew it would be far from perfect, but that if he would teach me, it would at any rate be very much better than if I tried to do it alone. So he agreed, and the lessons were very interesting and most helpful; no struggles with a stiff sugary mess, that had been such a nightmare some twenty years earlier, but dealing with quite accommodating sugar and learning to make little leaves, apples and pears, which was delightful work. I found out afterwards that Mr. Fortt had been awarded First Prize at an international cake icing competition in Rome.

In spite of Mr. Fortt's teaching, I spent some anxious days at Lacock, making the almond icing, the white icing, and eventually putting the ornaments on to the two tiers of cake. How to pack the cake was a problem; it had to be taken from Chippenham to Dumfries by train and thereafter ten miles by road to Speddoch. However, a kind Lacock neighbour had the bright idea of screwing the cake into a wooden box laid on its side, and in this way it travelled very well. I put it on the carriage seat beside me, and sat by it throughout the night journey, and it reached Speddoch with only one small leaf broken.

We had a bright April day for the wedding and on the previous evening both Grace and her betrothed were busy making a slender wreath of real myrtle leaves to hold her veil; we had to use artificial myrtle flowers, of course, as it was much too early to get the real ones. My brother-in-law, Edward Stewart, who had a particular gift for arranging flowers, made the house look lovely for us, and my mother made the wedding bouquet. Grace herself was a model of composure, remembering all the little details that had to be remembered, and, at the last moment, finding time to make a slight repair to my mother's diamond brooch, one of the stones of which had slipped.

When I got back to Lacock the day after the wedding, things felt very blank; no Aunt Rosamond, no Grace. But fortunately there were a good many things to do and to think of, among others the little Children's Home in the village, which Aunt Rosamond had started, and where old Henriette Sanit had a couple of rooms of her own. Henriette was beginning to fail a little, but was always excellent company. As time went on, we felt she was not likely to leave her bed, so I used to sit with her a good deal. One evening, the doctor said to me: "I don't think she is likely to last through the night, but she will not suffer at all." However, she slept on peacefully enough and in the morning opened her eyes and said: "Comment, me voila toujours ici?" A little later she spoke of my uncle: "Qu'est ce que M. Talbot va dire de cette Henriette Sanit qui ne meurt jamais?" Next day, she began asking me what would be charged for her grave in the cemetery. I told her all that was arranged, and that she need not think about it. She replied: "Mais, je ne veux pas qu'on me vole même si je suis morte." She died very peacefully a few days later.

By this time the shadow of the 1914 war was coming over us, and our first thought was whether Grace's husband would have to serve abroad. Our brother was then too old and our nephews too young to be called up. Fortunately for us, Grace's husband, who was on retired pay, was put in charge of an Artillery Training Battery near Edinburgh. At home I found many people were anxious to have cooking lessons, either for their maids or for

themselves, in case their present cooks might be called up for some national work. Uncle Charles said I might give lessons in the house: we had a room, the former nursery, which was well suited for the purpose and could be reached by an independent stair from the courtyard. This room was, in fact, the place where Grace and I used to make our chocolates. I brought in the invaluable oil stoves and we started.

It was quite amusing, as my pupils came from very varied backgrounds. I had some practical women and some young girls who had obviously never been inside a kitchen in their lives. I remember one day when I had just two pupils: a kitchen maid whom I was teaching to make some kind of soup, and a very pretty girl of seventeen who told me she wanted to learn everything from the beginning, and first she wished to know how to boil potatoes. This sounded very promising, so I gave her some potatoes and a brush, and asked her to wash and brush the potatoes and then I would show her how to peel them. She went to the sink and I returned to the girl who was making the soup. A moment later I saw my other pupil had come back, and looking at me with her lovely brown eyes, she said: "Please could I have some soap to wash the potatoes?" But she was a very charming girl, and during the first winter of war I had many interesting pupils—among others, some men from the Army Service Corps, which was stationed in the village.

CHAPTER NINE

The First World War – Canteen Work in France – Death of Uncle Charles – An Unexpected Inheritance – History of the Abbey and Village – War Work in Alsace

When war broke out, our minds were greatly taken up with the influx of Belgian refugees into the country. My uncle happened to have one of his houses in the village unoccupied; it was a pleasant Georgian house with a good garden. We were asked to receive a family consisting of grandmother, mother, aunt and four children. This family, though domiciled in Belgium, was really French, except for the four children, whose mother was French and their father Belgian. He had remained behind in Belgium to try to save his factory from the enemy. The house was unfurnished, but our neighbours rose nobly to the occasion and lent us tables, chairs, beds, house linen and everything that was needed. Other friends gave eggs, vegetables, groceries and so forth. Rather a pleasant plan was made for the Sunday dinners. Each Sunday one Lacock family undertook to provide a joint of meat, some vegetables and material for a pudding. So many people came in on this, that we did not have to return to the same donor for about three months. Messrs. Harris of Calne gave us once a week a parcel of bacon, sausages and many other good things; also a country proprietor sent us rabbits once a fortnight. The children's education had to be thought of; they were boys of fourteen and twelve, and girls of ten and eight. The son of our Lacock vicar was at home, and he undertook to be tutor to the boys; a lady who was governess to a neighbour's daughter in Lacock taught the girls until such time as we were able to get them all into schools. The grandmother was a trifle imperious and wanted to direct all the arrangements and indeed to order us all about. But the aunt, who was delicate,

had a gentle disposition and the children's mother was a delightful woman, clever, capable and most amusing; we found her excellent company.

The day of their arrival was an exciting time for all of us. We had a nice supper ready, flowers on the table, and I fixed up a Belgian flag outside the staircase window, so that it could hang over the hall door. The party reached Lacock about six and when we had shown them over the house, and told them where everything was, we left them to themselves, telling Mme. Caesens, the children's mother, that if there was anything else they would like, or if anything were amiss, she should let us know the following morning. About eleven next day she turned up. First, she thanked us very warmly for the house and for all the arrangements we had made for them. Then she added: "There is just one thing I would like you to take away—the German flag over the front door." I was astonished. "But Madame," I said, "it is the Belgian flag that I hung over the door yesterday; a tricolour of red, black and yellow." "I can assure you," she said, "that it is a German flag—a tricolour of red, black and white—come and see." I went with her. To my amazement the flag had really turned into a German flag over-night. There had been very heavy rain which had drenched the flag and washed out the yellow colour, without, strangely enough, affecting the black or the red. I felt sincerely thankful that she did not take this strange circumstance to be a bad omen. They stayed over three years in Lacock and made many friends.

Soon after the war began, we were told that a Soldiers' Hospital would shortly be opened in Corsham. My mother had come to stay with us at Lacock, so she was available to be with my uncle if I had to be away a night or two, and she also organised a work party in the Abbey. As many as fifty women usually came to work; we had good patterns supplied to us for the garments that were wanted. We served tea to our workers, and asked any of them who were willing to read us bits from the letters their boys wrote them from the front, and they were very kind in doing so.

One afternoon I had a message saying that the hospital would

be opened at Corsham Town Hall on the following day, and asking me to see to the cooking arrangements. The Town Hall was not really a very convenient place; though we had wards and a somewhat inadequate bathroom, there was no place for a kitchen. So our only plan was to cook the food in a small house on the oposite side of the street, and carry it over. There were two bedrooms in the upper part of this house and I had a girl, a farmer's daughter, who was a first-rate helper, besides other pairs of hands that were willing, if not always experienced. On the very first evening, thirty men arrived at about six o'clock, and needed a meal at once. One of the Corsham bakers proved a tower of strength. We had had no warning that these men were coming, but the baker produced bread, butter, tea, sugar, milk, bacon and eggs with wonderful speed. He and I had two frying pans and we fried bacon and eggs steadily till everybody was served. I slept in the house the first night, and we fixed up about breakfast the next morning, and then things gradually got into a routine. There were the men's meals, the nurses' meals, and the Matron's meals to be planned, in addition to the special diets which might be ordered.

We had a daily woman, one Mrs. Barrett, who came to wash up and help generally. One day I heard her make a notable remark to a girl who was beside her at the sink. It so happened that the morning before, a present of rabbits was sent to the hospital and I asked two of the soldiers to skin them. They didn't get on very well and after a time I thought I'd better finish off the job myself. Later on that day Lady Methuen asked me to come to tea at Corsham Court. This combination of circumstances led to the remark I overheard. "You be careful what you say before her, for if she's not gentry, she's in with them." Obviously no gentry could know how to skin rabbits, but, as I contrived to get asked out by gentry, I must be a dangerous person, who ran with the hare and hunted with the hounds.

After I had been working at the Corsham Hospital for about nine months, I had a very attractive suggestion from our neighbour, Mrs. Money Kyrle, to join her in going out to France to help with a canteen for French soldiers. Mrs. Money Kyrle was

taking her sister and her daughter, and wanted to have a fourth helper as well. The particular activity with which we were to be associated had the unusual title of "Oeuvre de la Goutte de Café," and its promoter was a M. Desmarquoy, who lived in Paris. We were under the patronage of the Vicomtesse de la Panouse, and we had very exact directions about our uniforms and our behaviour in general. Mrs. Money Kyrle gave a little send-off tea party at her club just before we started. Her friends rather laughed at our outfit of dark blue linen dresses, white aprons with red crosses, long dark blue serge cloaks, and blue head veils. The uniform was not uncomfortable, but felt rather voluminous. We went down to Southampton and put our very limited luggage aboard the steamer, but we did not sail that night nor did we sail for four nights more. There was a sweep up of submarines going on in the Channel and when at last we did leave Southampton, it was to cross at full speed with lights out, but we safely reached Le Havre and then Paris.

Everybody was good to us. Our uniforms were respected and we were generally called "Ma Soeur." We slept at the Hôtel du Nord close by the big station, and every morning after breakfast we went by train to La Courneuve, a place near St. Denis, and then we had a quarter of an hour's walk to the Dépôt des Éclopés, where our work was. This was a rather dreary place—a yard belonging to an iron works, the ownership of which was partly French and partly Scottish. The manager, Mr. Ferguson, proved a good helper to us. In this yard there were two buildings, each holding fifty beds for convalescent soldiers. Besides these, there was a barrack for those men who were well enough to go about the camp, and also a two-roomed hut which we used as a canteen. We served coffee and various tisanes which were popular with the men. These tisanes were supposed to be given, in the main, to the men who were in bed, but as a matter of fact, the soldiers who were walking about the camp also liked them. To us they seemed rather mawkish and washy. The flavours preferred were mint or camomile; we sweetened them with liquorice, for it was easier to obtain than sugar.

When taking round tisanes to the men lying in bed, we got the

impression that their diet was insufficient for lads of their age—many were eighteen or nineteen, and hardly any over twenty-five. French doctors are very anxious that their patients should not be feverish, so the convalescents were fed on very light nourishment, as a matter of precaution. Feeling sure that these lads were hungry, we wished we could be allowed to give them something more substantial than tisanes, but we were not at liberty to give them any food. Finally one of us thought we might be allowed to give them cups of chocolate. This, to our joy, was permitted, and we made the chocolate rather thick and sweet, with plenty of milk; the resulting beverage was very popular. We made it daily and every afternoon carried jugfuls round the wards. As it was liquid, it could be called a tisane, and no difficulty was ever put in our way, either by the doctors or anybody else. When we appeared in the wards with our jugs there were joyful cries of "Chocolat, chocolat!" and the lads held out their mugs eagerly. It was always a pleasure to do anything for the poilus, they were so grateful. The French Army had no Y.M.C.A. and very few comforts, so far as we could see.

There were some drawbacks, however, to our work. One of the principal trials was a travelling crane or *grue* which went about the yard shifting metal from one point to another on a little railway track. It made an abominable noise and was constantly running off the line. It often went aground—so to speak—in front of our hut, just where the men came up to get their coffee, or against the door where we usually came in, and we would be deluged with steam and smuts. The coal which this old *grue* burnt was particularly dirty and smoky; also it took ages to get her on to the rails again. Another of our troubles was the stove which warmed our hut and heated the big boilers of water and coffee. This stove was an iron contraption which stood in the centre of the room and had a pipe which went up through the roof. Owing, I imagine, to the quality of the coal, this stove drew badly and very often smoked; we were constantly told that the chimney needed to be swept, and we frequently did have the sweep in to deal with it. This, too, was a most remarkable performance, for he used to dismantle the stove pipe completely,

dividing it into sections and then joining it up again. This took a long while, besides making our hut very dirty.

I believe we were three months working at La Courneuve, and it was wearisome, indeed exasperating, when we asked for something to be done or to be mended, just to get the reply: "Cela ne marche plus." All the same, we met with a great deal of kindness. As we left the Gare du Nord in the mornings, the flower sellers would often give us a bunch of violets or some carnations, saying firmly: "C'est pour vous, ma soeur, pas pour les poilus." Once we saw an old lady who sold newspapers sitting rather dispiritedly in a corner: "Les nouvelles sont mauvaises," she said, and as she didn't want to make people unhappy she was losing money by not selling her papers.

Once when I had a day off it happened to be the "Jour des morts," November 1st, and I went with Joan Money Kyrle to the great cemetery at Père la Chaise to see the people putting flowers on the graves. In France there is a distressing tendency to buy the most unsightly wreaths made of black, white and purple beads strung on wires and lay them on the graves. But we thought that on this day they would bring real flowers, and they did.

It so happened we did not enter the cemetery by the main gate. Our bus took us to the upper side of the ground and we walked in by a small gate and went down a path. We soon reached the back of a very large monument, the lower part of which was ornamented with delicate bas-reliefs. I went up to it and began to examine them closely, then turned the corner and looked at those on the side of the monument; I then turned the next corner which brought me to the front of the monument. I was looking closely at the bas-reliefs there when I realised that there were some large figures up above them, and stepped back so as to see the effect of these. Instantly, I had a feeling of terror, as though I had stepped over a precipice, and at the same moment I felt as though someone pushed my shoulder from behind and knew I was again standing on both feet at the base of the monument. I turned and looked down. There was no one near me, but I saw a broad stone stair extending right down the hill to the main part of the cemetery below. Anyone entering the cemetery by the

principal gate would have seen the monument from below and probably walked up the steps. But, coming in as I did, and never having been at Père la Chaise before, I had no idea but that there was flat ground on all sides of that monument. If I had fallen, I must have been killed, and what exactly saved me from the fall, I do not know.

We were only four months in France and the time passed quickly till we returned to England.

In the late autumn of 1916, my uncle began to fail. I was giving some cookery lessons twice a week at a school near Corsham and an old friend was staying with me. She thought, and I did also, that my uncle looked less well than he used; but it was difficult to tell, as he had always been delicate, and he continued to lead his quiet life much as before, only doing things rather more slowly. I asked him to see a doctor, but he was not inclined to do this. However, it fortunately happened that the doctor wanted to see me about someone who was ill in the village and he came in to tea with us. After tea I left them together, and, as I had hoped, my uncle told the doctor he was not feeling well, and some advice was given which he followed. He seemed to have no definite illness, but his condition was rather like a clock running down. The doctor came daily, but Uncle Charles got more dreamy and confused as the days went on, and sometimes thought he was carrying out experiments in chemistry, perhaps a return to his school days, or some remembrance of having helped our grandfather with his researches. He used to wander round his room, or out into the corridor, so that I was afraid to leave him, but he never seemed unhappy or worried, only going on talking about mathematical calculations, which I understood even less than the chemistry. Then came a day when he preferred to stay in bed, which we felt was a safer plan for him. I did not like to send for a strange nurse, as I thought this might make him imagine he had been moved away from home. We had at the time a former maid staying in the house, who had been with us before her marriage and whose voice he knew, so that was a great help. My uncle's agent, also, who had formerly nursed his own invalid father, came in and helped us, especially at night.

Madame Caesens, our Belgian refugee lady who was still living in the village, often came along for a night, so that I was able to get a good deal of rest. The doctor still came daily. It was a comfort, afterwards, to feel that my uncle had never had a strange voice or face near him during his last illness. He had moments of complete lucidity and was then quite like his former self. One morning he suddenly said to me: "Where's that cursed King of Greece?" (It was a time when everyone was talking disparagingly about Tino.) I said: "I don't know; I suppose he's in Greece." "I wish he was in boiling Greece," replied my uncle.

Another time he said to me: "What was that song you used to sing?" I was quite at a loss having sung all manner of songs at one time or another. I asked him: "Can you remember how it began?" He pondered for a moment and then said: "It began, 'Come where the booze is cheaper,' can you remember how it went on?" I did remember and solemnly repeated to him:—

"Come where the booze is cheaper,
Come where the pots hold more,
Come where the boss is a bit of a joss,
Come to the pub next door."

He was then quite satisfied and went to sleep again. He had no suffering or restlessness and we never had to give him any sedatives. Sometimes, when he thought he was carrying out some experiment, I could only get him to drink his soup or milk by saying: "This is the co-efficient"—or whatever word he was using—as I held the cup. I felt very thankful, both for all the kind help we had, and for the fact that, though he had many illusions as to what he was doing, he never seemed the least distressed or frightened.

The end came very quietly, on the day after Christmas Day. My mother arrived the following morning, and Mary, Grace and Willie joined us in the course of the day. We none of us knew what arrangements my uncle might have made with regard to Lacock. We asked his lawyer, who said he had made a will and that it was in his office. I thought it very probable that my uncle might have left the house to the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, or some similar body, but we knew nothing.

Two days later, when the quiet funeral was over, the lawyer returned with us to the house and we went into the library, where he read us the will. The whole situation was rather like a scene in an old-fashioned novel. My uncle had left everything he possessed to me, without trustees or conditions of any kind. In fact I could have sold everything, had I so wished. Words cannot express my astonishment when I heard this, for such a possibility had never crossed my mind. My uncle had never given me the smallest hint of his intention. Once I asked him whether he would allow me to build a pair of cottages on some part of his land, for I had some money to spare, and I knew we would be the better for more houses. He said, "No." I went on to say that of course I should wish him to decide on the type of cottage; it was only that I was prepared to meet the cost, if he would either sell or let a plot of land to me. He replied: "I should not either sell, let, or give you any land of mine for any purpose whatever." I was both disappointed and annoyed, so I answered: "Then I shall ask so and so (mentioning a neighbouring proprietor) if he will." Uncle Charles said: "He can do what he chooses with his property." That was the end of the conversation, and I did nothing more, for I did not really want to ask the other man: it was only that I was cross. I was hardly likely to imagine that he would, in any circumstances, even contemplate leaving any part of his property to me. Personally, I had always hoped that my uncle might leave Lacock to Willie, who was an F.S.A. and who had an intimate and intelligent knowledge of ecclesiastical history and the care of old buildings. So, when we were alone, I told him that I wanted to make Lacock over to him, for I felt he was the right person to be the owner. He replied that he thought I was the right person. I then said that in any case I was free to present the property to him. He answered that this was so, but that he was equally free to refuse acceptance of it. He added, very charmingly, that he was sure I could manage to look after it, and that if I were in any difficulty, he would help me to the best of his power. And so he always did.

My uncle's will had been made twelve years earlier, that is to say, two years before Aunt Rosamond's death, so it was no

sudden decision. As I suspected nothing so little as that he should bequeath Lacock to me, I used to be perfectly frank and open with him. I sometimes suggested that it would be a good idea to do this or that on the property, and said: "If I were in your place, I should do such and such." He invariably replied: "It is fortunate that you are not in my place," which I took to imply disapproval of the suggestion. But it was obvious from his attaching no conditions to my inheritance, that he could not really have disapproved, or he would have left instructions that this or that was not to be done. A year or so after Uncle Charles died, our faithful Fred Bird said to me: "I once heard Mr. Talbot say: 'After my time they'll be giving tea parties in these cloisters.'" That was not a thing I had ever suggested to him, but I expect he knew it was what I would like to do. I am very glad he never told me what his intentions were, for if I had known, I could not have been so completely at my ease with him.

During the years I had been living at Lacock with Aunt Rosamond, and later keeping house for my uncle, I had grown to know very much more about country communities and the relation between landlord and tenant, and had found that many of my preconceived ideas were quite mistaken. All the same, I had never imagined for a moment that I would become an owner of property myself, and I now definitely shrank from the responsibility; my early distaste for the idea of owning property, did, for the moment, return. But, almost at once, I realised with thankfulness that, in Lacock, the relations between landlord and tenant had been happy, and that they might even become happier, if I could set about my task in the right fashion. Moreover, I knew I should have a great deal of help, not least from the tenants themselves. I realised that a great deal would have to be done, which it had not been possible for my uncle to do. Improvements would have to be made, and money must somehow be found for this, and of course we were still involved in a war. It was feasible, however, to lay plans, even to build castles in the air, and I don't see how, unless they are first built in the air, they can ever come to stand upon the earth.

We had to consider very carefully the question of finance. My

uncle had never been wealthy: he owned practically all the village, some farms and other land, but no stocks or shares. In fact, apart from the Abbey, the most valuable thing he possessed was Magna Carta. We all felt sure that this treasure must never be sold, but more than once we had wondered whether it ought to remain at the Abbey, for it was neither a family document, nor one connected with the Augustinian Foundation, but a national archive of the highest importance, which, moreover, had in all probability remained at Lacock through a mistake. Willie and I both felt it ought to be presented to one of the national collections, either the Record Office or the British Museum. But there were other things that could be sold, chiefly books and furniture, and the money used upon the property, notably for improved drainage in the village. My brother, though he was an F.S.A., was in full agreement about selling some of our valuable books, but nothing practical could be done till the war was over. The unlooked for responsibility felt very heavy at times, but, realising now that the relations between landlord and tenant could be happy, my feelings were quite different from those in the old days, when I read Kingsley's poems about bad squires and poachers' widows and decided I should never wish to be a landed proprietor. My actual responsibilities were the care of the Abbey (including the safe keeping of Magna Carta), the village of about 800 inhabitants, six farms, and some outlying cottages.

It was after Aunt Rosamond had returned to live at Lacock that I began to understand much more about the Abbey and the village, and I was touched by the welcome that the local people gave, not only to her, but to me. I found no emphasis was placed on class distinctions, but, on the contrary, there was a delightful feeling that the Abbey, the church and the village, formed one unit, and were, moreover, the cherished possession of all who lived in Lacock. This was especially the case with the Abbey. They always wanted strangers to see "our Abbey," and I think they felt a certain compassion for those who lived in any other place than Lacock, and they were equally proud of their village.

The Abbey is indeed unique, but the village has a very ancient

history. It consists of four streets forming a square. These streets are named High Street, East Street, Church Street and West Street. The three former are commonly called Top Street, Middle Street and Bottom Street, but West Street, for some reason, has no other name. In the space enclosed by the four streets are little yards and gardens, but there are no gardens, as a rule, in front of the houses. In fact, the whole construction is that of a small medieval town, rather than a village, for a village usually consists of one long street with a frontage of gardens, and a few shorter streets branching from it. It is said that a British chieftain, Dunwallo, founded three castles, one at Tetbury, one at Malmesbury, and one at Lacock, before even the Romans came to Britain. I do not think any traces of Roman occupation have been found at Lacock, though the Romans undoubtedly settled in large numbers in that part of the country. There can be little doubt that Lacock has been inhabited from very ancient times. Good natural pasture lay between the village and the river, and there were plenty of springs in that gravel soil, so there would be no want of water.

In medieval days there were handloom weavers in Lacock, working in wool and probably also in linen, and all the essential crafts would be represented; masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, leadworkers (as plumbers were then called), bakers, and butchers. I can remember all these trades being plied in the village, and there were three inns, and, half a mile away, a brewery. Manor Farm, with its dwelling house, barns and cowhouses, stood within the confines of the village, and altogether Lacock must always have been a self-supporting place. One of the houses in Church Street is said to have been a hunting box of King John's, and though the outside has been much altered, the interior clearly shows the remains of a very ancient hall; it must certainly be one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, house in the village. Besides this house there are many others, built in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and though, to some extent, they are interspersed with more modern work, the later buildings do not obtrude themselves, and the general effect of the village is very beautiful. High Street is broad, and probably it was here

that the market was held in former days. Church Street is narrower, and has many picturesque features, including a fourteenth-century "Cruck House." This is a building where a single piece of very heavy timber, with a slight curve in it, runs down from the roof ridge almost to ground level, and supports the corner of the house. Many of the houses have what is called a "horse passage," that is, a covered way from the street to the back of the house, through which a horse could be led to his stable. The old Tithe Barn, which stands in East Street, has very fine timber work in the roof, and is also interesting from the peculiar angle on which it is built, at the corner of High Street. An interesting point is that the same families have often occupied these houses for generations, and the names, Self, Selman, Hunt, Taylor, and others, are those by which the medieval inhabitants were known; these are no doubt their descendants. My uncle had one tenant who held his house by copyhold, a very rare form of tenure: my uncle spoke of him as "the last man of the manor." He left no descendants so the copyhold came to an end.

Lacock church is also of some antiquity; the present building is mainly fifteenth century, but there are traces of earlier work. The Lady Chapel is of great beauty, with richly carved bosses on the ceiling. Against the north wall stands the fine canopied tomb of Sir William Sharington, who purchased Lacock Abbey from Henry VIII after the Dissolution. Some regrettable alterations at the east end were made in the eighteenth and also in the nineteenth century, but these were to some extent remedied about fifty years ago, and the chancel is now much more dignified than when I first remember it.

A whole book might be written on the subject of Lacock Abbey. It is one of the best preserved monastic houses in the country, and streams of visitors come every year to see it. The land on which it stands belonged to Ela, Countess of Salisbury in her own right. She was a ward of Henry III, and a marriage was arranged for her with William Longsword, son of Henry II and Fair Rosamond, and Longsword became Earl of Salisbury in his wife's right. He was High Sheriff of Wiltshire, and a witness in 1225, of Henry III's confirmation of Magna Carta. As High

Sheriff he would hold the Wiltshire copy of the Charter, which was presumably his only book of law. In 1226 he died, leaving four sons and four daughters, and his widow, Ela, served for two years as High Sheriff in his stead. This is a very remarkable fact, and surely must have been unique, for in those days a High Sheriff had power of life and death. The Charter remained at Lacock Abbey from Ela's day until the year 1944, when I presented it to the British Museum. Ela would have used it during her shrievalty, and it can only be supposed that when she retired from public life and entered religion, all her documents, which were very numerous, were brought to Lacock from Salisbury, and among them, no doubt by mistake, the Charter, which ought to have been passed on to the next High Sheriff. The fact that very few people could read it in those days probably caused the mistake, but this circumstance accounts for its excellent preservation.

Ela was a woman of great public spirit. She obtained for the Lacock people the right to hold a market every Tuesday, and also a three-days' fair at St. Thomas'-tide. In the year 1229 she founded two religious houses in memory of her husband, one for Carthusian monks, at Hinton Charterhouse, and one at Lacock for Augustinian nuns. It is said that she laid the foundation-stones of both these houses on the same day, which must have involved a sixteen-mile ride on horseback from the one place to the other. The building of Lacock Abbey occupied only three years and it was consecrated by the Bishop of Salisbury in 1232. Six years later Ela relinquished public life and herself took the veil. She became the first Abbess of Lacock, for up to that time the nuns had been under the care of a prioress. It cannot be doubted that in addition to the training of women for the religious life, the Abbey was responsible for much good work. Girls came there for their education; women, especially any who had lost husband or father, were received in the convent as boarders, and protected there from a rough world. It was possible also, at the discretion of the abbess, for a whole family, father, mother and children, to be received temporarily, if they were in need of a home. There must often have been hard times for the Lacock

people, especially in bad harvests and outbreaks of plague, and worst of all during the Black Death; but we believe the Abbey was a centre of relief when there was any distress.

After being abbess for seventeen years, Ela considered she was growing too old for this responsibility, so she desired the nuns to choose a new abbess from among themselves, and served under her successor as a simple nun for five more years until her death in 1261.

Nearly three hundred years later, when Henry VIII became king, he determined to suppress all the religious houses and appropriate their incomes. The King's Commissioners first visited Lacock in 1535, and could find nothing worthy of censure, reporting that there was no disorder, and that the nuns carried on their work properly. Later, there was another inquiry, and the report was more detailed, and more sympathetic, for it said: "This is a house of great and large buildings, set in a town, to the same and all other adjoining, by common report a great relief." The nuns were described as "by report and in appearance, of virtuous living, all desiring to continue religious." But in spite of these testimonies, the convent was eventually suppressed, though it was among the last to meet this fate. We may take some comfort in knowing that the nuns had nearly five years' warning of what would happen, and that pensions were allotted to all of them. Some, it is said, went to a house in Beanacre, two miles south of Lacock, where they continued to keep the rule of their order. Others took refuge with relatives and Lacock Abbey ceased to be a convent.

The first lay-owner was Sir William Sharington, who bought the Abbey from the king. His reputation for honesty, while he was Vice-Treasurer of the Bristol Mint, was dubious, but, on the other hand, his artistic taste was excellent, and it is to him that we owe the beautiful three-storied tower at the south-east corner of the house, and much fine Tudor work. Though married three times, he had no children, and his brother, Henry, succeeded him at Lacock. Henry had no son, but a daughter, Olive, who married John Talbot of Salwarp in Worcestershire, and they settled at Lacock. Olive survived both her husband and her son, and the

succession passed to her grandson, Sharington Talbot. He went through some troublous times when Royalists and Parliamentarians were fighting, and Lacock Abbey was besieged for a fortnight. Then, wisely, he capitulated to the Parliamentarians; if he had not, great injury might have been done to the building, for it was not fortified, and quite unfit to resist attack. His son, John Talbot, who was knighted by Charles II, lived through comparatively peaceful days. It was in his time that the Blue Parlour was panelled. He left no son, but three daughters, of whom Anne, the eldest, married Sir John Ivory of New Ross, County Wexford, and the property passed to her son, who added his mother's name to his own, and was known as John Ivory Talbot. He was a kindly soul and very hospitable. For nearly sixty years he was owner, and he made important alterations in the Abbey, some attractive, but others much to be regretted. At the same time it must be conceded that the work he did was so characteristic of the earliest period of the "Gothic Revival" that it is now found very interesting by antiquarians. When I was a girl I was accustomed to hear my uncle, and others, say how much they disliked Ivory Talbot's work, especially his Great Hall, but I always liked it myself. It had such a friendly atmosphere and was so completely different from any room I had ever seen. The architect whom Ivory Talbot consulted about his alterations was Sanderson Miller of Radway, in Warwickshire. He was an amateur and a great enthusiast for the Neo-Gothic vogue. Some of the correspondence between him and my ancestor has been preserved, and shows that Ivory Talbot warmly approved of the suggestions made, and he also praised the Lacock masons for their good work. Further, he asked Miller to prepare the designs for the inside of the hall before the winter, so that the men might work under cover during the inclement weather. In the end the Great Hall was finished sooner than was expected, and Ivory Talbot decorated the ceiling by placing his own coat of arms in the centre, and, as a graceful compliment, surrounding it with the arms of his friends and neighbours, some forty-five in all. He wrote to Miller, saying: ". . . the grand opening will be deferred until about May, when all my friends who are in this country,

and whose arms are emblazoned on my ceiling, will do me the honour of their company, and a grand sacrifice to Bacchus will be the consequence." Whether this house-warming party ever took place, we do not know, but we may hope it did, for Ivory Talbot must have been the kindest of hosts.

I was always fond of the hall in spite of adverse criticisms I used to hear. Notwithstanding its size, 50 feet long by 30 feet broad and 36 feet high, it is a friendly room and is moreover wonderfully adaptable. It will accommodate 250 guests, and we have more than once had that number at family weddings; yet if only two or three of us are sitting there by the great fireplace, we feel quite cosy and intimate, with no sense of having been left in the town hall. It is decorated in an unusual fashion by terra-cotta figures, each standing in a separate niche of freestone, under a carved stone canopy. They were modelled by an Austrian artist, one Victor Alexander Sederbach, who was living in Lincoln's Inn Fields and whose work was very fashionable. He is said to have brought special clay with him, built a furnace in the grounds, and made and baked the figures on the spot. They are highly individual, and it is a great pity we do not know whom they are intended to represent. Ivory Talbot, according to a letter, asked that a figure of the Countess Ela, with a nun on either side of her, should be placed on the east wall over the fireplace, and this has evidently been done, but the personality of the other figures can only be a matter of conjecture. One figure is remarkably beautiful. It represents a bishop wearing his mitre, holding a book in his hand, and looking at it with an expression of deep attention. The modelling of the face and hands and the beauty of the whole figure are very fine. Another figure shows a crusader, with a particularly long sword. It is possible that these may represent two of Ela's four sons, for one was killed in the crusades, and one was Bishop of Salisbury. It is also possible that one of the largest figures may be that of her husband, the Earl of Salisbury, who was one of the founders of Salisbury Cathedral, for he is shown wearing an earl's coronet, and holding in his hand the plan of a church.

One interesting thing which stands in the hall is a massive

bronze pestle and mortar of the time of Henry VIII, proved by Sir William Sharington's name and crest, which are engraved upon it. I have never been able to move that mortar, though a strong man can do so. The pestle is a dangerous weapon 18 inches long by 2 inches thick. I have sometimes wondered what might have happened in Sir William Sharington's day, if the cook were in a fury with a scullion and attacked him with this pestle. The boy could only have saved his life by fleeing from the kitchen.

This hall has already served many purposes, no doubt, in the past, notably to provide indoor exercise. John Ivory Talbot is supposed to have said that he did not design it as a parlour but as a "walking place."

In recent days, as well as receptions, we have had concerts, children's parties, photographic commemorations, study circles and cookery exhibitions. We have danced Scotch reels in it and played Hallow-e'en games, and the room seems to adjust itself at once to whatever is wanted. Perhaps it looks most attractive of all at Christmas and New Year, when we have a huge log fire burning in the great open fireplace. So I feel greatly indebted to Ivory Talbot and Sanderson Miller. The stately room opening out of the hall, also designed in Ivory Talbot's time, was always used as a dining-room, until we realised what a splendid ballroom it would be, with its beautifully made oak floor. We held a dance in it soon after the end of the first war, and since then we have danced in it more times than I can count.

The next room beyond the ballroom is the south gallery; it is flooded with sunshine from the large bay window and the two oriels. These three windows were altered to their present form in 1829, which is reckoned a bad date in architecture, but nevertheless they are well proportioned and the general effect is very good. The middle window of the three has a special interest, for it is the subject of the earliest existing photograph, a tiny picture taken by my grandfather in 1835 and now preserved in the Science Museum. My grandmother used this room as her drawing-room, and here my great-aunts, who were both musical, used to play harp and piano duets, and to sing. Their harp still stands

here. Some of the most interesting pictures in the house are in the room. We have portraits of Sir William Sharington and his lady, also of Sir John Talbot and his beautiful wife, and a very fine portrait of Sir Gilbert Talbot, who was Ambassador to Venice in the seventeenth century, and was also one of the original members of the Royal Society.

A flight of steps leads from the end of the South Gallery into a charming square room which we call the Blue Parlour. It was panelled throughout in the early eighteenth century, but during many years the panelling was hidden by a number of bookcases which practically covered all the walls. After my uncle's death, we were able to move the bookcases and their contents to other rooms, and we examined the panelling, which we believed had been originally painted blue, with cream coloured moulding. Fortunately, there was no sign of woodworm or other trouble, but the original colours could no longer be distinguished. Owing, no doubt, to many years of coal fires and oil lamps, the blue panels had become greenish bronze, and the mouldings were just dull brown. Our village painter took great trouble and mixed many pots of paint for us until we found what we thought was a very pleasant shade of blue for the room. We hung family portraits on the walls, and an Aubusson carpet, given to us by my brother's widow, was laid on the floor, and the Blue Parlour was ready. Three or four years later, I was looking through an album of water-colour sketches, when I found one, dated 1829, painted by a cousin of our grandfather's, which showed the South Gallery, with the door into the parlour beyond standing open, and we found we had, without knowing it, hit on the original shade of blue. This was very satisfactory.

From the Blue Parlour, across a small room, it is possible to enter the middle storey of Sharington's Tower. The tower consists of three unconnected storeys. The ground floor room, which is rather plain, can only be reached by an outside door from the terrace. The storey next the Blue Parlour was intended for use as a strong-room. It was here that Magna Carta was kept; it is a single sheet of parchment 19½ inches by 12½ inches, closely, but exquisitely written, so that it is, even now, quite legible, and

the letters are beautifully formed. The Great Seal of Henry III shows, on one side, the king seated on his throne, and on the other side he is on horseback; it is of dark green wax and complete except for part of the edge being broken away. A piece of green silk cord is attached to the seal, and there is also a thin silk bag, now in two parts, in which it was formerly kept. It is wonderful that both the cord and the piece of silk are still flexible to the touch, after more than seven hundred years. One would have expected them to have crumbled into dust.

I was very glad that, after the Charter had been accepted by the British Museum and conveyed to London, the directors agreed to a request from Washington, that it might be lent to Congress Library, for two years. This gave great satisfaction to the librarian and to the whole American public. I was invited to be present at the ceremony, when our Ambassador handed the Charter to the librarian. This was a great privilege, and I remember thinking what a wonderful thing it was that the work of an unknown scribe, executed by him with such extreme care and conscientiousness should be still in perfect order after seven hundred years, and should be seen and admired by the people of a great country beyond the Atlantic, the existence of which he could never have imagined.

In offering the Charter to the British Museum, I said I supposed it would not be of quite so great an interest as King John's, but they replied that the opposite was the case. There are four examples of John's Charter in existence, one at Lincoln, one at Salisbury, and two in the British Museum, whereas there are only two of Henry III's in the world, the Lacock example, which is perfect, and another in Durham University Library, which is badly disfigured by ink stains. The Keeper of the Manuscripts added that another important point was that, as John did not keep his word, his Charter became null and void, while Henry III's Charter still forms part of the Statute Book of England.

After the Charter had safely returned to London, the British Museum had two facsimiles made, so perfect that they are indistinguishable from the original. One was presented to the Congress Library at Washington and the other was given to me,

together with the red morocco case that my grandfather had made, and in which we always kept the Charter at Lacock Abbey. Another kind gesture was that, the little silk bag being in two parts, the museum handed me back one part, so that I have a portion that is now just on seven hundred and thirty years old.

The middle room of the tower, where the Magna Carta was kept for so long, has stone shelves, also recesses to serve as cupboards. A very fine carved stone table is built into the floor in the centre of this room. It is a pedestal table, supported by satyrs, and is in perfect condition. The vaulting of the roof is beautiful and original with delicate carved bosses. The room is reached by two doors, separated by a few feet of stone passage; these doors are very massive, bound and barred with iron, and they still have their original locks. The uppermost room of the tower can only be reached from the roof, by walking along the balustraded parapet. This room also contains a richly carved stone table, but this one, unfortunately, has suffered some damage. The only stair in the tower is a short one leading from the topmost room on to the roof, from which there is a fine view across the River Avon and on to Bowden Hill.

From the other side of the Great Hall a gallery follows the line of the former refectory, and is crossed by another gallery, running north and south, and along these two galleries, which are really corridors, are the bedrooms of the house. Strangers looking at Lacock Abbey from the outside often imagine that it must contain a number of bedrooms, and be capable of housing many guests, but this is not so. The house, being built round two hollow squares, one the cloister court, and the other the large stable yard, has inevitably a great many outside walls, and comparatively few rooms. The South Gallery, for instance, has an outside wall on either side, the cloister walk below, and a leaded roof above: it makes a charming drawing-room, but that is all.

The most interesting part of Lacock Abbey, undoubtedly, is found in the monastic buildings on the ground floor. The thirteenth-century work is still in perfect condition, and there is beautiful fourteenth- and fifteenth-century work as well. The oldest parts are the chaplain's room, the sacristy, the chapter

house, and the nuns' sitting-room, sometimes called the "warming house (or, more pompously, the calefactory), because of its large hooded fireplace. Another hooded fireplace is found in the chaplain's room, and apparently (except for the kitchen) these were the only two rooms that were warmed. The sacristy and chapter house do not seem to have been heated in any way. It is necessary to remember, in this connection, that the dress worn by the nuns, consisting of a woollen robe, a woollen cloak with long sleeves which could cover the hands, and a closewoven veil over the head and shoulders, must have protected them effectively against the cold. Some fuller details are known about the outfit for Ursuline nuns, which was probably somewhat like that of the Augustinians. The Ursulines wore woollen stockings, and in winter they had leather boots to the knee; in summer they wore leather shoes to the ankle. So it is not likely that they felt too cold in winter. We can also be sure that the homes where the girls had lived, before entering the convent as novices, were far from warm according to our standards. There were great open fires, no doubt, but also expanses of stone floors and an abundance of draughts, so that coming into Lacock Abbey might mean little change of temperature.

The infirmary, a detached building, provided with its own chapel and kitchen, lay to the east of the warming house. There, any nuns who were aged or ill could live; and also, in severe weather, the whole sisterhood could adjourn there, if the abbess thought right. Nothing is now left of the infirmary; it may, perhaps, have been demolished in Sharington's time, when a garden was being made on the eastern side of the house.

It is remarkable that the succession to ownership of Lacock Abbey has frequently gone through the female line. Olive Sharington inherited from her father, Sir Henry Sharington, and married John Talbot. Later, Anne Talbot, daughter of Sir John Talbot, married Sir John Ivory; her son, John Ivory Talbot, had a son who died young, and the property was left to his daughter, Martha, who married William Davenport; and their son William added Talbot to his surname of Davenport. My Uncle Charles having died unmarried, he left Lacock Abbey to me, the daughter

of his sister, Matilda. The National Trust now owns the property, but our family is still living there, represented by the daughter of my late brother, William, and her husband. They have a son and daughter, and I am also living with them. So, either through sons or through daughters, the same family in blood has lived at Lacock Abbey since the days of Henry VIII.

After my uncle's death, my mother and Mary stayed on for some time with me at Lacock, and we planned a simplification of our household, as a good deal of money would be needed for death duties, and we had to retrench wherever possible. I gave notice to the five maids (there was a cook, a kitchen maid, an upper and an under housemaid, and a parlourmaid), and we no longer needed a stable boy. Our gardener and his wife agreed to live in the Abbey as caretakers, and we knew we could completely trust them; this made it easy for me to be away if necessary. We sold the grey carriage horse to a neighbour, and Lord Methuen's old charger—a beautiful dark bay which he had given me, and which we used to drive in the dog cart—was sent to Speddoch, where he lived happily for some years and then ended his days in peace. There were no more horses for Bird to look after, but he made himself extremely useful, mowing the grass, sawing logs, tending the furnace, working about the grounds, and even planting young trees for me on a stretch of ground above Bowden Hill. He planted close on a thousand larches, and later thinned them, and altogether he was an invaluable help. I felt I could leave the Abbey in the care of these good friends, especially as my uncle's agent, who had been with him for fourteen years, would continue to pay the wages and carry the other responsibilities that he had borne in the past. So I thought I could take on some war work again.

It was shortly after this that I had an unexpected request from one of my cousins, Isabel Clark Kennedy, to join a party to go to France, again under the auspices of the "Oeuvre de la Goutte de Café." As before, we were an *équipe* of four women, the other two being my cousin, Dolly Purvis, and her friend, Mrs. Buxton. But instead of going, as on the last occasion, to a place within a short distance of Paris, we were posted to a canteen at Bussang,

in the Vosges, a place which had been conquered by Germany and retaken by France.

It was early April when we started from London and cold for the time of year. We passed Paris and went on eastward to Epinal, and then to Remiremont, where we spent the night. It grew colder as we travelled, and when we reached Bussang next day the ground was thick with snow; and uncommonly cold it was there. Our sleeping quarters were at an inn called "Les Deux Clefs," and five minutes' walk took us to the building where we were to run our canteen. This was a fairly large place and well lighted. The job was quite different from the one we had at La Corneuve. There were no convalescents or *éclopés*. We were at a rail head, from which, every day, French troops went to the trenches, or came down from them to go on leave. Our work was to provide coffee and also a midday meal of hot soup and cold meat. The men had their own bread and their ration of wine. We had several orderlies to help us and we took our work in turns, for the hours were long; our first duty was to serve coffee at 4 a.m., but our good orderly, Josef, got the stove going and the coffee hot before we arrived. As we generally had to be on duty in the canteen until quite late in the evening, we used to divide the work, only two of us being in the canteen at any one time. The people at the inn were very kind to us, and gave us our meals at any hour.

We soon got into a regular routine. Coffee was served pretty much all day long; every morning we received a massive piece of raw beef, which was put on to cook in a great cylinder-shaped vessel of water, with a few vegetables, for we couldn't get many at that season of the year. Then we took the cold meat which had made yesterday's soup and sliced it up. Every man brought his tin plate and cup to the counter and got his portion of soup and his cold meat. As far as I remember, the men had only one cup, which they used first for soup and afterwards for coffee. We had constant requests at first for tin cups from men who said they had lost theirs; but we soon had to stop doing this, for our supply of cups was limited. So we fastened a tin cup to the wall, with a fairly long chain, at each end of our counter, and any cupless poilu had to make do with that. Our work was

generally an alternation of hurrying service with some quiet times in which we could slice meat or deal with the vegetables for the soup. During these quiet moments we could often have talk with some of the men, especially the reservists, whom the French call Territorials. I remember one of these older men coming up to the counter and asking me whether we had a hymn in England called "Plus prés de Toi, O mon Dieu, plus près de Toi." I replied that we had such a hymn. Then, with a bright smile, he said: "Alors, ça se trouve dans le Tipperary?" I replied with amazement: "Mais non, monsieur, ça ne se trouve pas dans le Tipperary." "Alors," he continued, "ça se trouve dans le God Save de King?" "Mais non, monsieur, ça ne se trouve pas non plus dans le God Save the King." "Comment," he went on in a puzzled tone, "vous avez d'autres hymnes?" It appeared that he had had an argument with a comrade as to where the words in question could be found; one of them had plumped for "Tipperary" and the other for "God Save the King." He was greatly surprised when I told him we had bookfuls of other hymns in our country.

Another time, an elderly reservist came up and asked me for paper and envelope to write a letter. When he had finished, we began talking, and he told me about his little property down in Provence and what a wonderful wine he got from his vines. He had a wife and one son; he had worked his property himself until his call-up, and after that his wife had tried to do the work, but it was too hard for her and she had injured herself, and would probably always be an invalid. He added: "Our son is now before Verdun and we do not know if we shall see him again." Lastly, with great dignity: "But if it will be better for those who come after us, then it will have been right." We were always happiest on the days when we were serving men who were going down on leave. On the alternate days, we served those who were going up to the trenches, and this was sometimes a bit of a heartbreak. Some were perfectly cheery, but not all. I remember one man shaking hands with me and saying: "Je n'ai pas peur, ma soeur, vous savez," and his hand was cold and wet. All I could do was to say: "Je sais bien que vous êtes très courageux!"

A good many of the men had pets, one had a charming dog

called Bijou, which was described as a "Chien de Chasse" and was a sort of pointer, but spotted like a dalmatian. He was very friendly and clever and perfectly obedient. His master asked us to take care of him for a fortnight and we were quite sorry to let him go. Another man had a tame fox cub. He had let it out in the canteen for exercise when suddenly Bijou came in. It ran up to Bijou, evidently wanting to play with him, but Bijou was so startled he ran away; and they both ran round the canteen, Bijou with his tail between his legs and the fox cub after him—an unforgettable sight. Another pet was a hedgehog; it also was perfectly tame with its master, who carried it about in his haversack. But when I tried to touch it the hedgehog curled up. "Ah," said his master, "il ne craint pas la mitraille, mais il craint le monde." A little white kitten was brought to us by one of the men, who asked us to keep it. It was quite tame and friendly but very dirty, quite grey in fact, and its nose was strangely pink. We gave it milk, but it wouldn't drink it, so we gave it some cold meat, which it ate. Suddenly I had an idea: I poured some common red wine into a saucer, and the kitten lapped it up quite happily. It had evidently lived entirely on meat and wine, and knew nothing about milk. That kitten was a brave little beast. The day after it arrived we had left it sitting on top of a sack of straw at the door of the canteen, when suddenly a huge dog, a Great Dane, which belonged to a man in the village, came in. I thought the kitten would be in the creature's great mouth before I could get across the room, but the little thing rose, arched its back, gave a hearty spit, and the Great Dane fled. After that we felt our kitten could hold its own. Its fur got nice and clean and we found a kind home for it.

Towards the end of our stay at Bussang, we had a remarkable experience with some soldiers from Auvergne. Mrs. Buxton and I were off duty one evening, and when the others came back to us at about half-past ten, they reported that a very disorderly crowd had come into the canteen. They were men going down on leave, and were already rather drunk. They refused coffee, used what the police call "insulting expressions" and succeeded in turning out some of the lights. My cousin was very angry

about this, for it was the first experience of the kind that we had had. She was inclined to report the matter, and even to say that we would close the canteen on the following evening, when the remaining half of the same regiment would be coming down in their turn. However, forewarned is forearmed, and Mrs. Buxton and I thought we ought to be able to tackle them. First of all, before the men could arrive, we turned on every available light in the canteen and made it very bright. We put a gramophone on our high counter, and just behind it a high stool, from which it was possible to see right down to the back of the room. Presently the men came in, most of them rather drunk, and many not very correctly dressed. Clearly they wouldn't want coffee, but we started a cheerful tune on the gramophone. Some of the men dropped down on the floor and went to sleep, but others listened and seemed to like the music. After a while we told them we had always heard that Auvergnats were very good dancers, and wouldn't they show us some of their Auvergne folk dances, as we had never seen any. After a little talking and refusing and pushing each other forward, one couple really did begin to dance in a most spirited fashion. The tune we had on the gramophone seemed to suit the dance, and some more men got up. Finally, even some rather drunk ones joined in, and though they occasionally fell over, they got up again and went on. I kept on repeating the same record and presently everybody, except the ones who were asleep, were either dancing or forming part of an applauding circle round the room. Half a hour went by, and then we stopped the music and began serving coffee. Most of them came up to the counter for it, and others helped by carrying coffee round to those men who had remained sitting. We had no more dancing, but got them to sing a few soldiers' songs for us, "Auprès de ma blonde," "Oui, je l'attends," and so on. Anyhow, the evening was quite happy and orderly, and I wished that some French officer could have come in and seen how well the Auvergnats were behaving. Strangely enough, I heard next day that Marshal Pètain had passed through Bussang that night, and that he actually looked in for a moment through the side door and must have seen the men, though of course none of us had seen him.

CHAPTER TEN

Service in the W.R.N.S.

AFTER my second visit to France, I came back to Lacock, but only for a short time. I felt it would be right to take on a more permanent war job. I had heard that a Women's Naval Service was being formed and I wished very much to get into it. One thing that drew me very much to the Navy was that my godfather had been an Admiral. He died when I was a very small child, but I always realised who he was, and for some reason supposed that, as I was his godchild, I would also become a sailor. I used to have visions of running up and down rope ladders and doing all sorts of amusing things that I imagined were done aboard ship. One day I said something to my mother about these aspirations, and she explained to me that little girls were not wanted for the Royal Navy, but only little boys. I wept and was most bitterly disappointed, but I suppose the hankering for a naval career never quite left me, for as soon as I heard about the W.R.N.S. I went up to London for interview. For a while I was afraid my application was going to be turned down, but it so happened that one lady on the Selection Board had lived in Dumfries and known us all in the old days, when we were running the Sphinx Magazine. She supported my application and I went into training.

I think there were about twelve of us at the time, and we lived in Upper Norwood and did our actual training at the Crystal Palace, under an officer of Marines, one Captain Jones. He was very strict, but not unkind. It was horribly cold in the grounds of the Crystal Palace and the March wind simply cut through us. Captain Jones was exceedingly particular about our appearance and I used to spend ages brushing away at my dark blue uniform. But I did not always give satisfaction. Once I reached the parade ground a little too early and sat on a bench there, till the other Wrens assembled. We had prayers, and then, as usual, Captain

Jones passed along our ranks. As he went behind me, he smote me on the shoulder and said: "Another time come clean on parade." I couldn't make it out, for I knew that I had brushed myself most punctiliously that morning. But afterwards I found out that by sitting on the bench I had got some dust on to the back of my coat and spoilt all the results of my labours.

When our very chilly periods of drill were over, we used to rush into the Palace, where we got a warm welcome from the waitresses who worked there for Lyons catering establishment. These girls were particularly kind to us, tucking us into warm corners, and saving us portions of the more popular things in that day's menu. They were very sorry for our having to be out so much in the cold wind, and pitied us from their hearts; but all the same, we honestly thought a Nippy's job was much harder than ours.

When my training was finished, I was posted to the Royal Naval Air Service Training Establishment at Cranwell. I had no very definite idea of what my work was to be, but was told I should get my instructions when I got there. So I went off, pledged to serve in the Navy for the duration of the war. Except for visits to Cambridge, I knew nothing of East Anglia and felt very much that I was going into the blue.

When I reached Sleaford, there was no one from Cranwell to meet me, nor any message, so I rang up the camp and after a while a tender was sent down and I was driven up to the Commander's office. He was not there, however, and the petty officer on duty informed me that the Commander was "ashore," meaning actually that he was in Lincoln. His First Lieutenant came along and said he would show me my quarters, and those of the thirty ratings, who were expected to report in two days' time. Cranwell was a very large camp even then, and there were several thousand men there, counting the Lighter-than-air Section, where the airships were. I had a sleeping cabin and a day cabin, in a hut where the Senior Naval Instructor also lived, and where day and sleeping cabins were reserved for the Commander, for the occasions when he had to remain in camp and could not go down to his own house. As the Commander thought I would probably rather

not be the only woman in the hut, he had brought down two of the Naval Nursing Sisters who worked in the sick bay. The First Lieutenant showed me where my ratings were to sleep and another building which was to serve as their recreation room. He did not seem to be quite at his ease with me, and I had a feeling that the influx of women into Cranwell was not going to be popular.

However, when I got back to my hut, I found the two nursing sisters there to welcome me, one was Irish, the other Scotch, and both were extremely kind and also sorry for me; the Scotch one—Sister Marshall—saying: "I wouldn't be in your shoes for anything." We all had tea together, and they told me we were to take our meals together in the wardroom mess at a special table. I went to bed in a neat little room, with quite sufficient space for the small amount of things I had brought with me. Practically all my things, as well as my uniform, were new. I thought it best that they should be, in view of the constant inspections that I imagined would be likely to take place, and also realising that I should have no time for mending. Sister Marshall told me that a personal steward had been provided for me—one Vickers—a boy of eighteen, who apparently had not been found very useful at other jobs.

In general I was to have the status of a naval officer. Sister also added that the Commander, whose name was Talbot, like my own, was not at all pleased that Wrens should be coming into the place. His predecessor, Captain John Luce of H.M.S. *Glasgow*, had asked for them, before there were any available, and now, when there were some trained and ready, Captain Luce had been posted elsewhere, and the Wrens were to be supplied to his successor, who hated the very idea of them. Sister also told me that when my name was first posted on the wardroom notice board, people sometimes asked the Commander if I were any relation of his and his reply was: "I don't know in the least who she is, but my relations are so damn fond of putting their noses in where they are not wanted, that I shouldn't be surprised." Altogether when bedtime came, I felt both depressed and apprehensive. But there was a big anchor woven into the white coverlet on my bed, and this was a very consolatory emblem. It comforted

me so much that I didn't worry any more, but fell asleep quite happily.

Next morning I went to report to Commander Talbot, who received me with cold civility, and said he hoped I was comfortable in my quarters. I thanked him and replied that I was. He then told me I should be getting instructions from Lieutenant Catleugh. That was about all, and he looked extremely gloomy. But Lieutenant Catleugh was most helpful and cheerful, and showed me where my ratings would have their meals and where the church was (which was a church only on Sundays and a gymnasium the rest of the week), and said he would arrange about the girls having some exercise, hockey and tennis, and perhaps the use of the big swimming bath once a week. I then walked all over the camp and found out where everything was.

Two days later, early in the afternoon, I went down to Sleaford to meet my thirty ratings, and had rather a shock. I never doubted but that they would arrive in uniform. To my dismay, they tumbled out of the train dressed in all sorts of garments, of every kind and colour. One, I remember, had a brilliant rose pink satin blouse, and they chattered like starlings. We reached camp and I got them to get down fairly quietly from the tenders, and took them into their recreation room, out of the inquisitive sight of the men. Then I fled to the Commander, who was fortunately in his office, and asked if I could have transport into Lincoln to get some overalls for these girls. He agreed at once and was, of course, as amazed as I was that they had been sent to us without uniforms. I was lucky enough to get thirty dark-blue munition overalls and caps to match. The girls quite liked them and were happy all the evening trying on their garments and making adjustments.

Next day was Sunday; I found my ratings had never done any drill and therefore couldn't march to church, so they had to walk two and two like a crocodile at a girls' school. They looked neat enough in their overalls. Next day they were all allotted to their different categories: cooks, typists, clerks, domestic workers and so forth. Some worked in the wireless section, some at "deleting crashes," which meant sorting out the usable parts from a crashed

aeroplane. In every case they worked under the direction of petty officers, and I was not responsible for their work but only for their behaviour. Very fortunately for me, nearly all the girls came from naval families; they were daughters or grand-daughters of petty officers, many of them from Portsmouth or Devonport, and they had a strong feeling for the honour of the Service. I was thankful for this as the girls had to live in the middle of the camp. In fact, barbed wire had been put round their huts, but I asked to have it removed, for I thought the sight of it was enough to make people want to climb over. I had a couple of girls in each hut who acted as section leaders, and I also had great help from the petty officers in the camp. One day I got some of these older men together and pointed out to them that most of the girls were only the age of their own daughters, and might indeed be the daughters of their friends. I knew they would be very sorry if any girl got into mischief through coming to Cranwell and I asked them to help me, as I couldn't be all over the camp at once, and anyhow hadn't got eyes in the back of my head. So they promised to give a word of warning in a fatherly way to any girl if they thought she needed it, and also undertook to come and tell me if they thought there was anything I ought to know. They kept their word.

The first draft of girls that came in were of a good type, and evidently came from good homes. But I realised, as time went on, we should probably get some of a very different kind and this proved to be the case. I also felt that the homes from which some of them came might be far from clean. So it would be necessary to have head inspections probably once a week. This would be most unpopular I knew, but it was best to start at once, so, on a Monday afternoon, about ten days after I came to Cranwell, I told the ratings I would want them all in their recreation room at 6 p.m. Sister Marshall had kindly promised to be the examiner. The girls duly assembled and Sister and I came in. I announced that Sister, at my request, was going to make an inspection of heads. Very black looks greeted this remark and evidently they felt deeply insulted. I went on at once by saying: "Sister will begin by examining my head." There was an empty chair in front

of Sister and I sat down on it, amid profound silence. She took down my hair and duly combed it, after which I made way for the next comer, and all the heads were inspected and found to be in good order. This became a weekly routine, and I don't think it was resented.

These first weeks were both disquieting and depressing. As the number of girls drafted into the camp increased, I used to wonder if it was humanly possible to keep order. It seemed so unnatural to have a bunch of about a hundred and fifty girls plumped down into a camp of several thousand men. I saw breakers ahead and I definitely lost courage. I knew it would be wrong to make an end of myself, but at moments, when rather inexperienced pilots were flying very low over the camp, I used to wish they would drop something heavy on me, so as to make an end of the position without my being responsible.

It was about a week after I had come to Cranwell, when there still seemed to be a great many things I had to learn, and great possibilities for doing the wrong thing, that I was crossing the camp when the Commander came by. He stopped and said: "If you are in a difficulty about anything, come to me; that's what I'm here for." I was very grateful, and thought how different he seemed from the man who had received me the day after my arrival. He did, in fact, become a very helpful friend.

Some of the arrangements that had been made before I came were rather amusing, notably my being provided with a boy steward. I always made my own bed and there was practically nothing he need do for me, except tell me whether the officers were wearing their greatcoats to church or not. I rather think he was pleased with his unique position as steward to a Wren officer, and I knew he showed privileged friends over my sleeping cabin when I was out. At any rate, one day I came back earlier than was expected, and I found my steward and three other men in my cabin. He alleged that they were checking blankets, and perhaps they were, but they seemed needlessly numerous. Of course, as soon as we had allotted sufficient Wrens to the more important work, we were able to have our own girls as our stewards.

I tried to let them all have as many interests as possible. They

played tennis and hockey, they were allowed once a week to shoot on the rifle range and have the use of the big swimming bath, and they had music and dancing almost every evening in their own recreation room. As time went on and our numbers grew larger I was promoted to being what was then called an Assistant Principal (equal to a Lieutenant), and later to be a Principal. I was able to promote two of my section leaders, and I had another officer—a very capable Irish girl—sent to me from Cornwall; so there were four of us to do the work, and this was none too many, as we had over two hundred ratings. We started a dramatic club, and a pierrot troupe, and as the girls worked hard all day, it seemed as though they would hardly have time to get into much mischief. They were first-rate good girls, and I shall always feel grateful to them.

More and more of the men were called to service abroad, and we took in more and more Wrens. (I am glad to say that all of them, after the first draft, came in uniform.) Soon we were asked to take over the transport yard, and I was lucky in that one of my three officers was a good driver, and well liked by the girls, so I could put her in charge. As our first huts could no longer accommodate us, we were moved into a large new building that had been vacated by the air mechanics. Before long we were asked to manage our own pay department; we had hitherto always received our pay from the Fleet Paymaster, and I felt rather disturbed at this added responsibility. Fortunately, we had among our ratings a girl who had been a head cashier at Harrods, and we put her in charge. Before the change-over took place the fleet paymaster kindly allowed this girl and a few others to work in his office for a week, to learn the routine. Our girls were hard-working and conscientious, and the pay office went smoothly and well.

By degrees the girls took up almost all the jobs the men had previously done: they came into the wardroom mess and were taught their work by the chief steward. The very last job to be taken over was that of wine steward. I asked that this might be postponed as long as possible as I thought it the most difficult of all the categories for a girl to manage. We chose a girl who was smart and good looking but had so much natural

dignity that it was impossible not to respect her. After we had amalgamated with the Royal Flying Corps to form the R.A.F. we lost a great many of the best men both in the Navy and the R.F.C., and were obliged to accept others of a very different type, who were a severe trial to the Commander.

It was when I had been at Cranwell for the best part of a year that the girls asked me if they might give a dance and invite the men. I said I would have to ask the Commander's leave, but that I hoped he would allow it. I also said that if they gave a dance, they must have a proper committee, and see that the floor was good, the music and the refreshments right, the room decorated with flowers and so forth, so that the dance should really be a credit to us. I told them I should not be on their committee, but would leave it entirely to them. Also that they should invite their own guests and see that the numbers balanced.

When next day I called at the Commander's office and asked if the Wrens might have permission to give a dance, he was astonished, and said: "Do you really wish them to do this?" I said, "Yes, sir." He answered, "Well, it must be clearly understood that if this dance is not perfectly orderly, I cannot allow it again." I said: "No, sir, of course not." So the preparations went on. Two days before the dance the Commander rang me up and said: "These women of yours have sent me an invitation to their dance; did you know they had, and am I supposed to go?" "Well, sir," I said, "I didn't know they had invited you, for they are arranging the invitations themselves; but they would be very much pleased if you would look in for a little while, if you can." All the same I didn't think he would be very likely to do so.

When the day arrived, he said he would like to go, and I went down with him to the party about half an hour after it had started. Everything was going beautifully: two of my senior Wrens were standing at the door to greet us, dancing was in full swing, and everybody's manners at their highest level. I noticed that many of the very nicest men in the whole camp were in the room, and I felt that the invitations had been sent out with excellent discrimination. When the Commander was leaving I came out to the door with him, and said: "May I say something quite unofficial,

sir?" "Certainly," he replied. "Wouldn't you be glad if your present officers could give as respectable a dance as this one?" "I would indeed," he said, and laughed heartily. I stayed on at the party until nearly the end of it and felt happy and thankful. The Commander told me next day that the Wrens might give a dance once a month if they wished.

During the first months of my work at Cranwell, Prince Albert, afterwards George VI, was in the camp. He actually lived, I think, in the house of Squadron-Leader Louis Greig and his wife, but in camp he commanded a bunch of boys who were very fond of him. I sometimes met him as I crossed the camp, and he always wished me "Good morning" by name, proving that he had the Royal memory for faces. In our relations with him, we observed no formality, he was addressed in the same way as any other officer of his rank, and privately spoken of by us as P.A. One day I was looking for some officer and by mistake opened the wrong door and came upon a group of about twenty lads tightly gathered round Prince Albert. I think he was telling them a story, anyhow they were all laughing and so was he, and everybody looked very happy during the moment in which I saw them.

Once, the day after we had taken in a new draft of girls, the section leader in one of the huts came to me in distress. She told me one of the new entry, a certain Mary, had evidently been a girl of loose life, and that she had been talking about her experiences to the others and had shocked some of them very much. Except for this she was all right, hard working and obedient. I sent for this Mary and we had a talk. She was gentle and quiet, of rather a low level of intelligence, but not really deficient. She evidently came from a very poor background and I had a feeling that perhaps her mother was responsible for the girl's way of life. At any rate, she said quite simply that she did not know it was wrong. I told her that now she was in the Wrens she mustn't talk about the subject to the other girls at all, but only to her section leader, or to me, and she promised. I wrote at once to London and said that evidently a mistake had been made by the Selection Board, and asked that if possible the girl might be transferred to the Wrens' Headquarters, or to some other place where

she could work with the women officers, as of course I did not want to turn her out of the Service, yet could not keep her in a large mixed camp like Cranwell. Then a rather wonderful thing happened. A very nice girl, the daughter of a chemist, who was in the same room as Mary, took her under her wing, and went for walks with her and generally mothered her, being a couple of years older. The section leader told me this, and I felt it was the very best thing that could have happened. I had a chance to thank the chemist's daughter, and tell her she was doing a grand piece of work. Mary kept her word to me and she was devoted to her friend. She remained in the category of domestic workers and could only do rather simple things, but was hardworking and quite steady. When I finally left Cranwell she was still in the camp, and I hope she has long since married and had a good home of her own, for she has deserved it.

After I was comfortably settled with three officers under me and our number of ratings had risen to over two hundred and fifty, we began to have frequent visits from a very beautiful cat, a black Persian called Tim, but who was, nevertheless, like most cats, a lady. She belonged to the Staff Paymaster, who was extremely fond of her, but she spent a great deal of her time with us. One windy afternoon, a ball of black and white fluff blew in at the door of our hut. This was Tim's kitten. When I picked it up, it felt like animated thistledown and literally buzzed with purring. The Staff Paymaster gave me this kitten and I took it to my sister and brother-in-law—both cat lovers—in East Lothian, where it had a long and happy life. The Staff Paymaster soon afterwards went to sea himself and he gave Tim to us. Fortunately, all my officers liked her. She did not seem to miss her master as she was so well used to coming in and out of our hut.

When the Spanish 'flu came to Cranwell a great many of our Wrens went down with it. Fortunately only one of them developed pneumonia, and we pulled her through all right. They were very good and patient while they were in the sick bay. Of course we had the nice white naval blankets, not brown or grey ones like the other Services, but we had no sheets. At ordinary times the girls used to put a face towel over the top fold of the blankets,

to keep the woolly surface away from their chins. But when they went ill, I felt they ought to have sheets, and I was able fortunately to buy some for them. I wasn't able to get as many as I wanted, for they were hard to procure just then, but we managed to make most of the girls more comfortable in bed, and indeed they deserved all the comfort they could have. They had been so steady, and so good, both at their work and in their leisure, that when I looked back to those early days when I had felt so anxious about the whole situation in camp, I could only marvel and feel deeply grateful for their loyalty and steadiness. One of their good qualities was straightforwardness. An officer who had several of them working under him as writers told me that if they found they had made a mistake, or got into some muddle in their work, they would always come straight to him and tell him. This usually enabled things to be put right at once. The men, on the other hand, would often conceal a mistake, hoping it wouldn't be found out, and thereby cause more trouble.

When the armistice came, it seemed very sudden, and it became rather hard for us to keep discipline. There was a feeling of tension being relaxed in every direction, and a certain risk of insubordination. We hastily fixed up a party for that very evening, and of course other celebrations were arranged, but gradually everybody realised that we could not be released at once, and that we would have to go on doing our work in the meantime. A certain number of both men and women were released by degrees and, as we got further into November, Christmas presents and festivities had to be thought of.

In February 1919, we had very severe weather, and Lincolnshire is certainly a cold part of the country. I often had to go to London for some business with the Air Ministry; we were now working with the R.A.F., but were allowed to go on wearing our beloved naval uniform. One day as I was being driven to Grantham, our small car skidded on the ice, swung round, and might have gone over the side of the road on to the frozen fen below, if my chauffeur had not sensibly driven it straight into a pile of road metal, where we stuck, damaging the car but saving our lives. After this I had what I thought was rheumatism, and a few days

later, when I found it almost impossible to get out of bed, I asked the Fleet Surgeon to come and see me; he said I had extensive phlebitis in both legs and must go into the sick bay. A nurse was sent down and she put me into my dressing-gown and packed my clothes. Then a party of sailors arrived with a hammock, into which they proceeded to lash me and carry me carefully into the ambulance. We laughed a great deal and I asked them not to drop me over the side, for I was still alive. As a matter of fact, the hammock was a good idea, for when we reached the sick bay, they were able to slide me in through an open window straight on to my bed.

I was in sick bay over six weeks, but it wasn't such a dull time, for people came to see me and I was really still on duty, as well as sick, for all sorts of messages had to be brought to me and attended to in some fashion. My delightful Irish "Number One" came in one day very indignant about something. She cried out: "Ma'am, wait till I tell you." I could promise that I would wait as long as she wished, for I was forbidden to move out of bed. Many friends looked in, and one day a deputation of the ratings appeared with a silver tray and a very charming message. It wasn't quite a year since I had come to Cranwell, but we had all become great friends. Afterwards I learnt that it was forbidden in the Navy for ratings to make presents to their officers: we none of us knew that.

I got all right in the end, but it was a slow business. Most likely the trouble started when the car skidded and turned round suddenly. It very likely jarred something and upset the circulation in my legs. Kind as everybody had been in the sick bay, it was a joy to get back to our hut, and to live once more with my officers. Soon I realised, however, that I could not do as much work as before, and anyhow the whole W.R.N.S. was likely to be disbanded before long. So I retired, and my "Number One" was appointed in my place, and very well she did the work.

When the W.R.N.S. was finally disbanded, she had a very charming letter from the Air Commodore (formerly captain R.N.) telling her he was sorry to lose the Wrens, both because of their conscientious work and because their influence in the camp had been so good. He said they made the men think of their homes.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Lacock Abbey once more – Tenants' Party – Queen Mary's Visit – The Abbey Pageant – Visits to Newfoundland and Philadelphia – Centenary Celebration of W. H. Fox Talbot's work

I GOT back to Lacock accompanied by two of my officers, and also by a wheel chair, for I was still lame. My mother and Mary were there to welcome me, and Willie also came for a couple of days; but I found it difficult to adjust myself again to civil life. My officers went away, only leaving the wheel chair behind them, and I am afraid I was cross and disagreeable company for everybody. That year was a difficult one in many ways, for I felt I had really to tackle my responsibilities at Lacock, and I didn't see where to begin. I expect it was a sort of war fatigue as well as the problem of accustoming oneself to be more or less alone after a long period of always working in company with other people. But my mother and Mary remained for some time and that helped very much.

I paid a brief visit to Cranwell before the Wrens were disbanded, and after that little break, going back to Lacock was easier. Two old friends came to stay: Kenneth Forbes, whom I had known since very early days, and who had been one of the few people who used to come and stay at Lacock during my uncle's lifetime; and one of our County Mayo friends, Georgina Knox Gore. These two were a tremendous help and made many excellent suggestions. One day, when they were both staying with us, we thought it would be fun to try to light the fire in the Great Hall, where I had never seen a fire burning, though my mother told me she had once seen one in her childhood. Fred Bird was asked to examine the chimney to see if there was anything blocking it. He reported: "Nothing, no more than a few skeletons." By this he no doubt meant the skeletons of starlings.

We made a fire and lighted it and it burnt beautifully. Kenneth Forbes looked at it thoughtfully, and said: "I see many happy hours for many people in the light of this fire." I hope his words have come true. That first Christmas we had a party of six staying in the house. The gardener's wife, who had been caretaking for me, did some of the cooking, and I also did some. We had no electricity or gas, but we struggled with paraffin lamps of various types and were excellently well served by our paraffin cooking stoves. In the evening we often danced, Georgina playing for us, and all went happily.

After Christmas I went to Speddoch and stayed with my mother, which enabled my sister Mary to go on a couple of visits. It was while I was at Speddoch that I got into communication again with Mrs. Fricker, whom we had known in Switzerland. I felt I very much needed somebody to stay with me at Lacock and help with the entertaining, and indeed with everything. Mrs. Fricker was then living near Bristol, and I thought she might be able to spare me her youngest daughter, Margot. So I wrote to her, and we planned to meet as soon as I came south again in April.

I had not seen Margot since she was nine and had no idea whether she would care to stay with a person so much older than herself. We all three met in Bath for a talk, and I suggested that she could come for a couple of weeks as a trial trip to see whether she liked it or not. Margot was rather shy and her mother did the talking; she seemed to think her daughter would certainly be happy at Lacock, but I was not so sure, remembering how I felt myself when I was twenty. Mrs. Fricker asked me if I were not very fond of gardening. I said "No," I wasn't really, but that if Margot would like to have a piece of garden for her own, that would be quite easy to arrange. Upon that Margot looked up quickly and said she wasn't a bit fond of gardening either. This was encouraging, and I went on to say that we had a good piano and she could play as much as she liked, or read books and study. I knew she was good at French—they had lived so long in French Switzerland—but suggested I might rub up my German, if she would like that. Then I said: "I don't suppose you

would care to learn Russian?" Her face lit up, and she answered that it was the language she most wished to learn, especially as her brother Guy was in North Russia at the time, attached to Denikin's Army. So, on the double ground of our disliking gardening and liking Russian, we decided to make a start.

Margot was not only gentle and attractive, with more than the usual share of good looks, but she was mature for her age and interested in all manner of things, so did not mind having to associate constantly with an older person. Mrs. Fortune, who was continuing to caretake and partly cook for me, welcomed her arrival, and we made a very satisfactory household. Margot and I planned the meals and also did some cooking, and we devoted all the time we could spare to learning Russian from some very helpful books I had given me from Oxford. I should have found it almost impossible to do this alone, but as we were two, we could hold the book alternately, and question each other. After a while we could even use some of the phrases we had learnt, in a very elementary and comic type of conversation. There were difficult spots, of course, and the grammar was hard, especially the verbs, but the sheer charm of the language carried us on. It was like paying court to a beautiful and capricious woman: she is maddeningly unreasonable and one is furious with her, but all the same one cannot cease making love to her. We did some entertaining as well: our very first guests, I think, were the President of Corpus Christi and his wife, with Georgie Knox Gore and Kenneth Forbes. The weekend was a success, and after that we invited someone for every weekend unless we were away ourselves.

One of the first things we planned to do at Lacock was to have a party for all the tenants. I could not remember that my uncle had ever arranged such a gathering, nor had I heard of one in our grandfather's time. The coming of peace, and my now being owner of the Abbey, seemed two good reasons for inviting the tenants. We had a lovely day in late spring, and about two hundred guests sat down to tea at long tables in the cloisters. I was a little concerned about how people should be seated, but we found it quite simple to invite them to sit down just where and

how they liked. I noticed our principal farmer was sitting next to a labourer's wife, and they were talking together in the most friendly manner. We did not arrange any special entertainment, for after tea everybody walked about the grounds, where we had arranged to have plenty of seats, and they were all quite happy until the time came for them to go home. There was one very interesting old lady among the guests, whose name was Bethia. She wore an old-fashioned black silk mantle trimmed with jet beads. She was well over eighty, but her bright eyes and deeply sunburned skin were the picture of health. She had walked to the party, but one of our friends drove her back, for she lived nearly a mile away. As she was getting into the carriage, I said: "Good-bye, Bethia, I hope you had a good tea." "That I did," she replied, in a loud cheerful voice, "just about a good bellyful," and so departed amid shouts of laughter.

I was touched by the pleasure the people showed at my having become mistress of Lacock Abbey. They were interested in my having been a Wren; one woman said: "Ah, you didn't leave the Germans till you had 'em beat," as though I had personally engaged the enemy. Another woman said to me: "Could I ask you a question? Now that you're our lady, couldn't you buy yourself a nice diamond necklace?" When I explained that I was afraid I couldn't, she was disappointed. I think she would have liked to see me wearing the diamond necklace in church, so that she could say to strangers: "That's our lady, you see her there, with the diamond necklace."

I have always valued the frankness of Lacock people, combined as it is with kindness. When I first came back after the war I was very tired, and no doubt walked rather slouchingly. One of the tenants looked at me and said: "I expect it's because you're tired, but I do wish you'd hold yourself up a bit better." So I promised I'd try. Many a time I've felt I must try to do this or that because they expected it of me. It was rather a touching sort of relation, they wanting me to be the best I could be, and I wanting not to disappoint them. I know I should have been much slacker in many ways if they had not expected better things of me. I think it was George Eliot who said: "Those who trust

us, educate us," and that is certainly one of the truest things ever written.

So the summer went on and by the end of it I had entirely got rid of the after-effects of my motor accident at Cranwell. Early in the autumn Margot went back to her mother, and I also went north to my mother in Scotland, and stayed there over Christmas, not coming back to Lacock until the following April, when Margot joined me again, this time with her brother Guy, who was home on leave. It was a particularly happy summer; the weather was continually warm and bright, hardly ever broken by a thunderstorm, and we had many young guests and plenty of dancing. But it was the last summer in which I could have Margot's help; for that autumn she decided to train as a hospital nurse, a very wise decision, for she undoubtedly had the vocation.

For a while I spent a good deal of time in Scotland with my mother, also with Grace and her husband, and with Willie and his wife. I had seen so little of them during the war years. It seemed wise, too, only to spend every second Christmas entertaining at Lacock, and to stay with my mother on the alternate Christmas. This also made the rather limited income of Lacock go further. I felt more and more that, being an untrammelled spinster, I ought to invite lonely people for holidays, especially students from the Dominions. It chanced that some neighbours one day brought Lady Frances Ryder and her mother, Lady Harrowby, to tea at Lacock, and they were telling me about their work in London and elsewhere for men and girls from overseas; that work which has now developed so successfully into the Dominions Fellowhip Trust. Lady Frances asked me if I would receive some of her protégés. I was only too glad, and a few weeks later we welcomed a young South African lad of twenty-two who was reading law at London University. I have always called him "my eldest," for he was the first of the many overseas guests who came to stay at Lacock. He stayed with us many times, and on one visit told us he was engaged to a South African girl. Eventually he settled in Tanganyika and later he brought his wife to stay with us, and another time they both came with their little son. In fact, he has never come to England without

paying us a visit, and, as I write, I have little doubt that he will come again. I think that we received overseas guests at intervals for over twenty years, never less than two at a time, so that they could be company for each other, and sometimes we had four or five.

As time went on, living at Lacock grew easier and easier, and I seemed to be finding out what the house was meant to do. Margot, of course, could no longer come to help me, but I often had some girl as a temporary daughter. Among the older friends, Georgie Knox Gore and Kenneth Forbes came at nearly all the holiday periods and were invaluble. Kenneth was naturally fond of young people, and they were devoted to him. He was a most amusing raconteur and an excellent mixer.

We were also very fortunate in our small staff. Frederick Bird, our former coachman, gallantly undertook all sorts of jobs, and never minded how early in the day, or how late, we might want him. He cut up our big logs, carried our coal, fetched milk from the farm, took letters twice a day to post, cleaned shoes, polished knives, bicycled in all directions to do the household errands and carry notes for me, for we had no telephone then. He also called our men guests in the morning, and took them their early tea and brushed their clothes. When we had a party he rejoiced exceedingly, being of a most hospitable nature. He had always regretted that no parties could be given in his master's time. He was "ably seconded," as the newspapers say, by one Elsie Webb, who came to us every morning about seven, and stayed on until a quite undetermined hour at night. She took care of our lady guests, cleaned the rooms light-heartedly and swiftly, set the meals and waited on us at evening dinner. Though she was a mature spinster with no brothers, I never knew a woman with such strong sporting instincts. She invariably knew the exact state of a test match, and any boys staying in the house used to appeal to her for information. Elsie was, if possible, even more hospitable than Bird.

In the summer of 1922 Lacock Abbey had a special honour. Sir George Holford of Westonbirt came over one morning and told us that he and Lady Holford were expecting Queen Mary

for a few days' visit, and he would like to bring her over with her suite to see the Abbey, and could I arrange to give them tea. I was, of course, delighted, but told Sir George I was conscious of one difficulty. Being hostess, I should find it very hard not to be the first to speak, but to wait for Her Majesty to do so. He comforted me by saying that this piece of etiquette was abolished and that I was quite at liberty to speak first.

My mother and my sister Mary were staying with us at the time, also Kenneth Forbes, my young nephew Henry Stewart and Georgie Knox Gore. The suite, Sir George Holford told us, would number about eight. This was a new and exciting experience, and we set to work to lay our plans. We had five days to get ready, and everybody helped. Georgie went to her home in Bath and brought back a very pretty Georgian silver tea service to grace the table. A neighbour lent silver hot water jugs. I felt I should certainly need an A.D.C. for the day, so we thought of a young South African naval cadet who had stayed with us at intervals since he was thirteen, and who was now spending his leave from Dartmouth with our good friends the Frickers.

We got all the tea arrangements well forward during the morning. Her Majesty arrived at 3 o'clock; I met her at the bottom of the front hall steps, and we at once walked round to the south front, and into the cloisters. I was much touched by one thing. A few people from the neighbourhood had gathered in a field not far from the front door, to watch the Queen arrive. As we walked by on our way to the cloisters, a young school-girl in the field put up her camera. The Queen immediately stood quite still to let the girl make her picture, and a very nice picture it turned out. Her Majesty told me she greatly admired the way in which some flower beds were planted by the lodge gate, and asked me to tell the man who had done them how much she liked the effect. As we went round the cloisters and the other monastic buildings, our young cadet was always within hail. Her Majesty asked him how long leave he had from Dartmouth. When he told her, she smiled and said: "You boys get much too much leave." He grinned appreciatively.

When it seemed that we should have completed the tour in

about fifteen minutes, I made a pre-arranged sign to him, and he went swiftly into the house to ask my sister Mary to start making tea. So by the time we got right round the house and back to the hall steps everything was ready. We had arranged a small table near the centre of the hall for Her Majesty, Sir George Holford and me, with my mother's wheel-chair drawn up beside it. There was a long table for the suite, my sister pouring tea at one end and Georgie Knox Gore at the other. Kenneth Forbes and Henry Stewart waited on the guests at this table, and our naval cadet waited on us at the Queen's table. It crossed my mind, as I was pouring out tea from Georgie Knox Gore's very pretty teapot, that if the Queen asked me how long that teapot had been in the family, I should have had to reply that it had been less than twenty-four hours in the house. But she did not ask, and possibly had often realised that pretty things may be lent to her hostesses in order that they may do greater honour to their Queen.

After tea, we showed Her Majesty our treasured Magna Carta, which had been at Lacock Abbey since the thirteenth century. We laid it out on a table and Kenneth Forbes stood guard over it. After she had inspected the Charter, we took the Queen all through the inside of the house, and even up on to the roof-walk over the South Gallery, which involved a certain amount of climbing. Her Majesty was very active and I could not help noticing the fine arch of her foot as she went up the steps. She was greatly interested in furniture and obviously had expert knowledge of the various periods. We were lucky in having fine, clear weather throughout the afternoon. Our good Elsie, Mr. and Mrs. Fortune and Fred Bird had all greatly enjoyed the day, especially as they had been left to go about free of any responsibility. It seemed pleasant, too, that Her Majesty should have been waited upon by my nephew and our other young friends, and that no one had felt nervous or worried, but that everybody had rejoiced in the opportunity of helping to entertain their Queen.

While we were busy with our many guests at Lacock, I had no time to work at Russian, and realised I was forgetting a good deal. That is the penalty for taking up a language after youth is passed: you not only learn more slowly but forget more quickly.

However, the Professor of Slavonic Languages at Oxford at that time was kind enough to let me study a few weeks with him, and later, at Speddoch, we had a Russian lady staying with us who made me read aloud to her, among other things, the whole of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* from cover to cover. I very nearly cried at the place where Nicholas Rostov, who has gambled away a large sum of money, tells his father he is sorry.

My brother Willie was always a great support to me, and I often turned to him for advice, but it was with some misgiving that I asked him if he thought it might be a good idea to celebrate in 1932 the seven hundredth anniversary of the founding of Lacock Abbey in 1232, by arranging some sort of reproduction of the dedication ceremony. I was both surprised and delighted when he agreed. I had been rather afraid that he might feel it was impossible to reproduce the ceremony correctly and that therefore it might be wiser not to try. But he was entirely in sympathy with the idea, and we were also supported by another F.S.A., the architect Sir Harold Brakspear. I think it was in the early spring of 1931 when we first talked over the matter, and began laying our plans. We had a small committee of three men and three women; at first we thought of engaging a producer, but the fees quoted were quite beyond our means, and moreover we were beginning to feel that we wanted our Lacock pageant to be different from any of the pageants which we had read about or seen. Most pageants consisted of a series of episodes based on the history of the town or village concerned, beginning from the earliest things that were known or conjectured about it. Often these episodes had a great deal of charm, but there was something kaleidoscopic about the change of periods, and when the whole pageant was over, and the performers mixed with one another and with the audience, the effect was something like a fancy dress ball. It seemed to us that we should do better if we confined ourselves to the representation of a single day, the actual day in 1232 on which Lacock Abbey was solemnly dedicated to its holy use by the Bishop of Salisbury. We resolved to make every endeavour that the representation should be historically correct.

I knew the preparations would involve a good deal of work and that I should need a secretary, but I could only offer a very small salary, and every office, and indeed every individual, to whom I applied said it would be impossible to get competent help at the figure I suggested. At last, through a neighbour of ours, I renewed acquaintance with a delightful girl whom I had met a few years earlier, and she agreed to be our secretary. Moreover, she was so much interested in the scheme and so anxious to have a share in it, that she dismissed any idea of a salary. She introduced me to Dr. Eileen Power, who was then Lecturer in the History of Economics at London University, and who proved an invaluable help, lending us books, and even coming herself to stay at Lacock and to make all manner of practical suggestions.

Meantime I had received a very attractive invitation from some American friends, Mr. and Mrs. Morris, to spend Christmas with them in Philadelphia and I felt so happy about the prospects of the Lacock pageant that I ventured to accept it. This interlude in the United States was a very delightful one. I had always hoped and dreamed that one day I might get there and now it had come true. We reached New York in the old *Aquitania* on a lovely December morning, bright and frosty under a pale blue sky. The first person I met when I came off the ship was a very charming elderly lady, one Miss McElroy, who had once been our guest at Lacock. She had come in on purpose from her home at Yonkers, outside New York, because she thought my Philadelphia hostess would hardly be able to get into the city early enough to meet me, but a moment later I saw both Mrs. Morris and her daughter on the quay; they had come to New York the night before, to be sure of meeting the *Aquitania* when she came in.

From that moment I seemed to float along surrounded by welcomes. Mrs. Morris asked me: "Are you tired, or would you like to come up on to the Empire State Building?" I was delighted to come, and in a very little while we were, I don't know how many storeys up, in an open-air restaurant gazing down on a marvellous view, the streets looking like narrow canyons, with brightly coloured taxis running about like beetles. There was no

smoke anywhere; just some little jets of white steam from the heating plants. I was interested to notice that the tall skyscrapers were not, as I had supposed, all grey, but that they were of varied colours, some white, some green, some yellow, some brown or deep red, and that their shapes were often graceful, not unlike Italian campanili. As I was staring about me, Mrs. Morris asked: "Do you like fish?" I said I did, so she turned to the waitress and said: "Three sea food lunches"; and excellent sea food it was, followed by first-rate coffee. Then down we went to the great Pennsylvania Station, where the red-capped negro porters saw to my baggage, and we went by train to Philadelphia, No. 2113, Spruce Street.

The house was beautifully warm, but everything felt airy and fresh; the sitting-rooms had no doors, only sometimes a portière curtain. In the drawing-room window there was a big Christmas tree, gay with coloured electric lights and, indeed, throughout the whole house there were more electric lights than I have ever seen before at one time. After a few minutes, Mr. Morris came in from his office. He stretched out both hands to me and said: "Well, isn't this bully to have you here!" By the time we had finished dinner I felt utterly and completely at home, with a feeling as though these kind people were my cousins and that I had know them in childhood. This, I expect, was partly caused by recollections of our childhood's story books, which were many of them American: *Little Women*, *Good Wives*, and *Little Men*, besides *Queechy*, *The Wide, Wide World*, and *What Katy Did*. So many chance phrases that I heard in conversation reminded me of what the people said in these books.

The few weeks I spent in America went by very quickly. I was taken to Washington, Mount Vernon, Princeton University, Atlantic City, and everywhere there were new experiences and new interests. One of the pleasantest of my recollections is of attending one Sunday at the Friends' Meeting House outside Philadelphia, where Penn used to preach. The morning was crisp and lovely, the sky was blue, there was a sprinkle of snow on the ground and everything sparkled in the frost. The little meeting house in the woods had large windows and the sun came pouring

in; it happened that Mr. Rufus Jones was the speaker. After the meeting was over I was introduced to many of the Friends and could not help thinking what a wonderful serenity there was in their faces. I noticed this most of all in the faces of a Mr. and Mrs. Scattergood, a delightful name, and I can only say their faces matched their name.

Americans are famous for their hospitality and there was hardly an evening when we were not invited to somebody's house. The best thing of all was the warmth of the welcome, but besides that, I loved the actual warmth of the rooms and the brightness of the lights. I thought electric current must be very cheap or that people could not mind how expensive it was, for so many lights used to be turned on at once and there never seemed to be any anxiety about turning them off again. Once at a dinner party of some twenty-four people I was much impressed by the lighting. Round the walls there were electric lights prettily arranged in groups, and on the dinner table itself stood tall, pale rose-coloured candles, unshaded, but tall enough for the flame to be well above the eye level of those sitting at table. The whole effect was really gay, and to me it was exhilarating. I was just turning to my dinner partner to say how much I liked it, when I saw him draw a pair of dark glasses from his pocket. "Do you find the light too much?" I asked him. "I couldn't bear it," he said, "I should be sick if I didn't protect my eyes."

All the same, neither the pretty rooms, nor the excellent food, nor the bright lights, were anything more than a background to the real affection of my kind host and hostess, their children and their friends. Their coloured servants, too, welcomed me as though they were part of the family. They consisted of the butler, his wife, the cook, and her sister, the housemaid. The housemaid's name was Lily: I think dark-skinned people must like to gave their little girls names which suggest whiteness, for I remember another maid whose name was Blanche, and there was a little Jamaican cook at a house in Washington whose name was Pearl.

While in America I had several very helpful hints in regard to the Lacock pageant. Mr. Morris suggested that I should write to

Cecil Boutflower, the Bishop of Southampton, and ask if he would take the part of the Bishop of Salisbury. This was a splendid idea and we carried it out. Mr. Morris had been Ambassador to Japan, under President Woodrow Wilson, and he had seen a good deal of the Bishop in Tokyo. Also my brother Willie had studied with Cecil Boutflower and liked him very much.

My last few days in America were spent in New York, in a flat on East End Avenue, as the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Flack, who had once stayed with us at Lacock Abbey. This was a complete change from Philadelphia, but the welcome was as warm. I was taken to theatres and dinner parties, and once to supper in a "speakeasy" (those were the days of Prohibition). I found that this "speakeasy" was much the same as any well-managed little Italian restaurant in London, except that the entrance to it was dark and secluded. The weather was fairly cold, but the air was delightfully invigorating, and I enjoyed prowling around the city, and learning to find my way in the subway and the shuttle. I had expected New York to be full of harsh and disagreeable noises, but the Elevated with its clanking sound was really the only one. I think every city has a different traffic note; Paris has a higher pitched one than London, and New York lower than either. The first night I slept in New York, Mrs. Morris and I were in an hotel in the centre of the city, many floors up, and the noise of traffic in the street below sounded to me like a great waterfall, and was not in the least unpleasant. It was extraordinary to see how many nations were represented in that city; some streets had all their notices printed in Hungarian, others in Rumanian, others in Polish, according to the nationality of the people who lived there.

Once back at Lacock Abbey, we settled down in earnest to get on with the pageant. We had come to several conclusions: first, that we could pull it off ourselves without any producer; second, that all those taking part should be people belonging to the village or their friends; third—and we felt this to be very important—that everybody should be shown engaged in his own trade, the blacksmith should be a blacksmith, the shepherd a shepherd, and so forth. Also that everyone taking the part of a

clergyman should be a clergyman. For the nuns, we decided to have women who were nurses or engaged in some definite work of mercy. In this way there would be a certain reality about everyone, both in their appearance and their behaviour. Further, we considered that there need be no written parts, nothing for people to learn by heart, but simply a full grasp of the idea and a spontaneous expression of it in their own way. With these conclusions our people were quite in agreement, and this plan gave them a maximum of liberty. We were able to get suitable materials for the costumes from a friend in Manchester, and also to get patterns of thirteenth-century dress; so we sold the performers numbers of cut-out garments, which they bought at cost price and made up themselves.

We had to put up some temporary structures. In the large courtyard of the Abbey we had a blacksmith's forge, carefully copied by our own blacksmith from a thirteenth-century design, taken from a book in the British Museum. There were carpenters' benches and a primitive turning lathe; there were blocks of wood —actually sections of tree trunks—on which the stone carvers worked. There was a stand for the lead worker, and a bench for the old lady who wove rush seats. A farmer's wife took care of the cheese section, and another woman had herbs and simples. Fortunately, there was one man in Lacock who had a family recipe for making mead and the Excise laws allowed this mead to be shown, or given away, though it could not be sold. Also we had a booth, surmounted by the traditional green bush, for the alewives. They were watched by the ale taster and mug measurer, according to the old regulations governing the sale of liquor. This was remarkably picturesque and also very amusing, for our principal and most loquacious alewife, besides being a born actress, was a lifelong total abstainer.

In the wood yard to the north of the main buildings we had a number of farm animals: sheep, pigs, donkeys and goats, besides some delightful geese, one of which was so tame that the goose-girl carried it about in her arms. There were also some handsome Devon oxen harnessed to a cart piled with sheaves of corn. We were able to find a man who could thrash with a flail, and he

taught some of our Lacock lads, so that we could have a genuine threshing floor and see the grain being beaten out and the chaff flying in the wind. We could not manage to erect a mill for grinding the corn, but a real miller was there with his sacks of barley meal, and the baker and his helpers baked flat round loaves of the orthodox pattern, in a wood-heated oven of the medieval type, which our masons had built for the purpose. I shall never forget the excitement of sampling the first loaf, which we did some weeks before the pageant took place. We found that the oven worked perfectly and that the barley bread was excellent.

Having planned the background thus far, new thoughts kept coming into our minds. We felt that on a festival such as this Dedication Day there would have been music and sport, feasting and dancing; and we were lucky in securing the help of a prize-winning team of morris dancers. They brought their own fiddler and danced extremely well. Besides the morris, we had some country dances, and a troupe of acrobats and mummers drawn from the village itself. A clergyman living near Lacock had a good knowledge of thirteenth-century music, and he taught our people a beautiful song called "Samson," besides "Sumer is icumen in." The feasting took place upon the terrace, where we built a big wood fire and hung a cauldron over it. We tried to be strictly correct in our details and served nothing that could not have been obtainable in 1232. The feasters sat at a plain table and used the flat halves of the barley loaves, which were rather like large muffins in shape, instead of plates. Soup, made of field beans and onions, was served from the cauldron into wooden bowls and eaten with horn spoons. The next course was chickens roasted on spits at the open fire: the scullions carried a whole chicken on a spit to each guest, who cut off with his knife as much as he wanted, laid it on his bread and ate it with knife and fingers, for it was not yet the day of forks. The revellers had beer and mead, which they drank out of horns, and finished off their meal with some apples. We had a few beggars wandering about in the crowd, and they came up to the table and had scraps thrown at them; some of the geese came following the beggars, which made the whole scene even more effective.

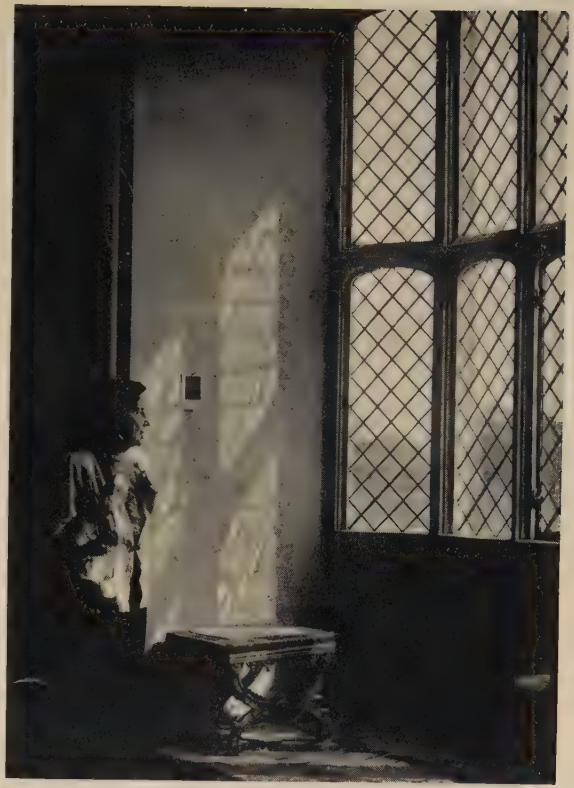
We could have gone on multiplying the features of the background indefinitely, for there seemed to be no end to the interesting things we might have done, judging from the illustrations in contemporary manuscripts. We might have had doctors trepanning their patients, huntsmen with horns, lords and ladies carrying hawks upon their wrists, a schoolmaster with an impressive birch rod and many other things, but there was no time to arrange them. We put in a couple of Jewish money-lenders to mix with the crowd and very effective they were.

All this was background to the main theme, which was the dedication of the Abbey. Ela, the foundress, attired in a violet mantle, her countess's coronet on her head, and in her hand the mace of a High Sheriff, rode on a white palfrey, caparisoned in blue with the golden leopards of the House of Salisbury; two ladies-in-waiting rode beside her, and four knights in chain mail rode immediately behind. It was really a delightful family party, because I represented the foundress, my two nieces, one dressed in crimson and one in pale rose colour, were my ladies-in-waiting, and the four knights were my four nephews. We all dismounted at the church door and waited for the bishop and his procession of clergy and choristers. Some choirmen from Dorsetshire sang the "Urbs Celestis" beautifully, and the dedication service was reverently and carefully reproduced, mainly by music and gesture. When the bishop raised his hand in blessing, the people on the terrace all knelt down, and some of them said to me afterwards: "You could feel he was really blessing us."

Visitors came from near and far to see the pageant; there were charabancs from London and other big towns, and one of my American friends even crossed the Atlantic for it. The total attendance was just over ten thousand, and we were sincerely thankful that we had no accidents, because some of the passages and doorways were rather narrow, and we could get no extra police to control the crowds. Yeomanry troopers, assisted by my four mounted knights, galloped about the field to intercept possible gate-crashers, and we had some helpful territorials, and also Boy Scouts carrying their staves. Most of all we had the orderliness and cheerful good humour of a British crowd, which

[*Mansell*

9. MATILDA TALBOT AS ELA, COUNTESS OF SALISBURY, LACOCK PAGEANT, 1932



[*A. T. Schofield*

10. MATILDA TALBOT IN THE SOUTH GALLERY, LACOCK ABBEY, by the window, the subject of W. H. Fox Talbot's earliest existing photograph

[*British Council*

II. MATILDA TALBOT IN THE GREAT HALL,
LACOCK ABBEY

was better than any extra police. When the great day was over and we settled down to our accounts, these also proved very satisfactory, although our expenses had risen far above the figure originally contemplated. I had thought £500 would be sufficient. Willie lent us £300, which he was prepared to lose if need be, and I had borrowed £200 from the Lacock Estate Account, hoping this might be recovered out of the takings; but the expenses, all of which seemed to be necessary, incurred at the suggestion of antiquarian and other authorities, continued to rise. As we wanted our production to be as historically correct as possible, these expenses, it seemed to us, were unavoidable if we were to obtain the desired result. For some reason, I felt quite calm about it, though the cost of the production rose from the estimated £500 to something over £1,100.

However, the attendance was so large that we recovered the whole amount by our gate money, and even had £25 to the good, which we presented to Lacock School. A real fan mail reached us during the following week. A good many people seemed to think that the idea of reproducing a single day, complete with its background of village life, was more artistic than the usual series of episodes. At any rate, the whole thing was thoroughly enjoyed, most of all by those who had themselves taken part.

An interesting point was that all the men taking part were dressed as men, and all the women as women, with the solitary exception of the fiddler who played for the morris dancers. In the thirteenth century the fiddle would undoubtedly have been played by a man, but it so happened that this distinguished team of morris dancers from Steeple Langford had arranged for a woman musician to play for them, and very well she played. Fortunately, she had a slender, boyish figure and looked quite well, and quite masculine, in her thirteenth-century dress. With regard to costumes in general, we begged our people to wear their dresses for some time before the pageant, so that they should not look brand new on the great day. This added greatly to the reality of the effect. The clothing of our beggars caused us much thought; we chose rather poorer stuffs than those worn by the other performers, and then left these lengths of material on

bushes and exposed them to wind and weather and the chance of a stain or a tear, after which we dyed them in various rather dull colours before giving them out to be sewn. As a result, the wearers looked decidedly poverty-stricken as they hung round the dining-table asking for scraps. It simplified our work very much that the dresses belonged to the people who wore them. So there never arose any question of losing dresses or failing to return them.

Our people showed a touching sense of consistency. Most of them sewed all their costumes by hand, because they knew there were no sewing machines in the thirteenth century, and they thought the use of one would have been wrong. The distinguished photographer, Mr. Hoppé, chanced to be in Lacock a few months before the pageant, and he got into conversation with some of our people at the inn. He told me afterwards that he had never come across the same spirit of dedication in preparing for a play, except at Ober-Ammergau.

I had hoped that our plan of having a pageant representing the events of one day only might have been copied by other producers, but, as far as I know, this has not happened.

During the autumn after the pageant, we were greatly occupied with a family wedding. This was the first wedding to take place in Lacock Abbey since 1852, when our grandfather's half-sister, Horatia Feilding, married Thomas Gaisford. The present wedding was that of my nephew, Henry Stewart, and our distant cousin, Joan Murray, a charming girl whom we had known from her childhood. We decided to do the catering ourselves, as we had done for the weddings of both my sisters; but we knew that this wedding would involve much more preparation, as we expected well over two hundred guests. However, we had a lovely sunny day and all went well. There was enough to eat and drink and everybody seemed happy. Moreover we danced in the ballroom, which certainly seems the right thing to do at a wedding, and one which we had never been able to do at the family weddings in Scotland, not having had a large enough room.

As soon as everything had been cleared up after the wedding, we turned our thoughts to photography and to the pioneer work

which our grandfather, William Henry Fox Talbot, had accomplished in his lifetime. No biography of him had yet been written and we felt that not enough was known about him, especially by the young photographers of the present day. My brother Willie sympathised warmly with the idea of having some sort of celebration. As our grandfather had achieved the first practical results of his experiments during 1834, my brother felt we should have a Centenary Celebration in the course of 1934.

We decided to make a thorough search through letters and papers, and also to record any stories about him that our mother had told us. Though I had seen him only once, in that long ago summer of 1877, I remembered his kind face and his kind voice. We had always heard as children that he was a very wonderful person, and that he had invented photography, although, of course, it was not until we were much older that we could realise in how many fields of knowledge he had attained distinction, and what tireless energy and what great patience he had.

I believe we children thought of him as something almost supernatural. My mother so often told us how much he knew about the stars, their names, how far off they were, and so on. Then she constantly spoke of his interest in plants and flowers—how many rare and beautiful things he obtained from distant places, and made them grow at Lacock Abbey. Once she showed us some hieroglyphics and said, "Your grandfather knew what all those funny little pictures meant." Another time she showed us some cuneiform writing and said, "Your grandfather could read that."

But she told us other things about him. Once, as a very little girl, she had driven with her mother and some other ladies to Bowood, and on the return drive she had noticed a pretty wild flower, and wanted to stop and look at it, but was afraid to ask. On getting home, she told my grandfather about the flower, and he, delighted that one of his offspring should show botanical interest, immediately arranged to drive her back to the place to show it to him. The flower proved to be nothing rare or remarkable, but he was pleased at her interest in it.

Another time, my mother was wearing, on her necklace, a

little silver charm made like a tiny pair of scissors. It happened to be Sunday, and someone said, "You ought not to wear those on Sunday, they are an emblem of work." Instantly, in a quiet tone, my grandfather said, "Work suspended!"

She also told us how anxious he was not to give trouble. Sometimes when he was absorbed in his work, the fire in his room went out; he might have rung for a servant to come and re-light it, but no, he would just go and get himself another coat and work on. His three little girls used to play at battledore and shuttlecock in the Great Hall, and its walls echoed with their shouts and laughter. But he would never tell them to stop—he just came along the passage and shut the intervening doors. However, my mother said, when they had seen him come along and shut the doors, they tried to be quieter.

We knew very little of his early days until my sister and I found, in a box, a number of letters, written by my grandfather in his boyhood, and carefully put away by his mother. When he was only six she made him keep a diary. The first entries are in her writing, but he very soon wrote for himself. All his remarks seem to us strangely grown-up. He wrote in one place, "We played 'Thoughts' "—this was a guessing game rather on the lines of Twenty Questions—"I thought of the city of Pompeii, which Mamma guessed. Mamma thought of the Brazen Bull belonging to Phalaris, Tyrant of Agrigentum, which I guessed."

He loved figures, and one entry goes, "I have cast up how many miles I have travelled in my life, and find it to be 2,613." It was about this time that he made a memorable remark which shows an early interest in astronomy. He had a nurse, Betty Vickery, of whom he was very fond, but one day, when his mother came into the nursery, he said, "Mamma, Betty is very disobliging. I have asked her to revolve on her axis, and she will not."

It is not surprising to learn that, at about this time, the family doctor was of opinion that little Henry read too much and sat still too much. Later he was sent to boarding school at Rottingdean, but was very homesick at first, feeling acutely the separation from his mother, who was an entirely sympathetic com-

panion; all the same, he did well with his books and gained praise. He wrote home from this school, when not yet nine, "Send me some Stinsford beer, and send me some cakes in a little while, but send the beer directly." I should add that my grandfather was all his life a most abstemious man.

From this school he went on to Harrow, where he did brilliantly, and was quite popular, though he lived to some extent in a world of his own. For instance, he wrote to his mother on one occasion, "They" (not "we") "have started cricket." While at Harrow he studied keenly two subjects not in the school curriculum—botany and chemistry. For the former he went for long walks with a kindred spirit, and they collected specimens, which, however, had to be thrown away before they re-entered school—I suppose because of the contemptuous attitude of the other boys.

His interest in chemistry became a passion, and in a letter to his mother he spoke of "Enjoying my favourite Science, which at present engrosses all my attention." He managed to collect some necessary materials for experiments, but, alas, one day an explosion resulted, and though nobody was hurt, both the Headmaster and his own mother decided that practical chemistry must stop. He was most indignant and felt he had been unfairly treated. Dr. Butler tried to make amends by lending him all his own books on the theory of the subject, but this was not enough. Eventually a friendly blacksmith let him carry out some experiments at his forge.

Among the school-boy letters that we found, many were written not only to his mother but to his stepfather, Captain Feilding, R.N., who was extremely fond of him, and the affection was returned. It was evidently a beautiful instance of love and sympathy between step-parent and child, and must have been a great happiness to his mother.

He was not yet fourteen when he was put into the sixth form, and a year later Dr. Butler himself recommended that he should leave Harrow, as, if he stayed, he would have become Head Boy of the School, and the master felt he was too young for the position. After two years with private tutors, he went up to

Trinity College, Cambridge, where again he did brilliantly, being twelfth wrangler, winning the Porson Prize, and one of the two Chancellor's Medals, which constituted at that time the highest classical honour obtainable in the University.

He married in 1832, and in 1833 went to Italy with his wife, taking with him a small camera obscura, and tracing on paper the outline of the view shown by it. This proved as unsatisfactory as his previous efforts at sketching. His thoughts on this subject are recorded in his beautiful book, *The Pencil of Nature.*

> "This led me to reflect on the inimitable beauty of the pictures of Nature's painting, which the glass lens of the camera throws upon the paper in its focus—fairy pictures, creations of a moment, and destined as rapidly to fade away.
>
> "It was during these thoughts that the idea occurred to me . . . how charming it would be if it were possible to cause these natural images to print themselves durably and remain fixed upon the paper!
>
> "And why should it not be possible? I asked myself."

Starting from the knowledge that nitrate of silver darkened under the action of light, he began to experiment, and within a year he was able to send some contact prints to his relatives, who described them as "shadows." Some of these had great beauty and delicacy, but he was not able to fix them, and so they had to be kept away from light. The following year he did manage to fix some by using a strong salt solution. The next step was to get pictures, not by contact but by exposure in a camera. Progress was slow, but he did eventually obtain very small negative pictures in the little cameras, made by the Lacock carpenter under his direction, and known to the family as "mousetraps." This was the germ from which all subsequent photographic work has developed, for it was a negative, and being fixed, any desired number of positive pictures could be obtained from it.

One of these tiny negatives I was lucky enough to find after a long search. It had a note on it in my grandfather's hand and was dated 1835. This negative represented one of the latticed windows in the South Gallery at Lacock Abbey, and most fortunately it had not been lost, nor was it appreciably faded. Negatives which

he had undoubtedly made a year or so earlier had perished, but this little thing, not much larger than a postage stamp, was so clearly defined that a photographer friend of ours was able to make positive prints from it, and to enlarge them to about four times the original size.

This little negative was, I suppose, the most interesting thing we had to show, but we had many other examples of my grandfather's work, both calotypes and photoglyphic engravings, and also some of the cameras used. *The Pencil of Nature*, which he wrote in 1844, was actually the first book ever to be illustrated by photography, and it contained more than one prophetic statement. Certain invisible light rays, now known as "ultra violet," were known to him for their effect upon sensitised paper. My grandfather also indicated the use of photography for the detection of crime.

We were ready on Saturday, June 23, and numbers of people came to see the display. Mr. Herbert Lambert, Managing Director of Elliott & Fry's studios in London, spoke of my grandfather's photographic work, and mentioned that the results of his experiments were announced on January 5, 1839, before the Royal Institution, a few days before Daguerre made his communication to the Academy in Paris. It was a remarkable occurrence that two men working upon independent lines made what were really two different inventions, with the same object in view.

Mr. A. J. Bull, Head of the L.C.C. School of Photo Engraving in Fleet Street (then President of the Royal Photographic Society), described my grandfather's photoglyphic engraving process, which was, to all intents and purposes, photogravure. My brother Willie—Prebendary W. G. Clark-Maxwell—spoke of the old man's personality, and of his career as a whole. Willie was twelve when our grandfather died, and could remember him quite well. He reminded the gathering of Fox Talbot's many other attainments; that he was a finished classical scholar, an accomplished linguist, and one of the pioneers in deciphering and interpreting cuneiform inscriptions in Assyria. His election in 1831 to the Royal Society had been in recognition not of his scientific but of his mathematical work. My brother went on to

assure the meeting that our grandfather also recognised his duty as a country gentleman. He manifested a lively interest in the politics of the day, and was a strong reformer and a member of the Whig Party, sitting as Liberal M.P. for Chippenham in the first reformed Parliament.

It was a full life covering three-quarters of the nineteenth century, and it was a serious life, but he had a lighter side, and enjoyed a practical joke. As a young man he was once in London on an occasion when large crowds were expected, and which furnished opportunity for the pickpocket, especially owing to the tailcoats which were worn at that time. He thought to play a joke on any pickpocket by secreting in his capacious tail-pocket a large number of handkerchiefs, each tied to the other. When, in due course, the pickpocket extracted the first handkerchief, he was startled to find another in its wake, and then another, a whole sausage string of them, until he dropped them and fled. My brother ended by saying, "Altogether Fox Talbot, while a scientist of great and varied attainment, was a very human and lovable man."

I remember that when the last three speakers had sat down, Mr. A. C. Dent (representing the Federation of Master Process Engravers) rose to his feet and asked if he might add a word. He then said that if society owed a debt to the man who could make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, what did society not owe to the man who was the Father of Photography, and through whom thousands of jobs now existed where, before his invention, there had been none.

Altogether it was a very pleasant gathering and one which certainly made our grandfather's work better known. I feel, however, that there is room for a good deal more to be done in this field, for people do not all realise, by any means, how much they owe to our grandfather, Henry Fox Talbot.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Visits to Estonia – Cookery and Food Exhibition at Lacock Abbey

It was during the photographic meeting at Lacock that I made the acquaintance of an Estonian lady, Mrs. Eleanor Hunerson. She was staying with a neighbour of ours and came on to spend a few days with us. She was a most accomplished woman, speaking fluent English, German and Russian, besides her native language of Estonian. She also understood both Swedish and French, in either of which she could converse a little. She was language mistress in the High School of Tartu (also called Dorpat) and Chief Commissioner of the Estonian Girl Guides. It was really her guide work that brought her to England, for she came over to take part in a conference. We were delighted to make her acquaintance: she had a cultivated singing voice, and sang us some Estonian folk songs, which were charming and which we had never heard before. When she bade us goodbye she invited me to visit her in Tartu. I was overjoyed, as I did not know Estonia at all, and had never even been up the Baltic. She told us she would be home by the end of August and that I should be welcome any time after the 1st September.

I wrote to the office of the Baltic Corporation, an English owned company, and found they had a cargo boat, which could take a few passengers, leaving London for Riga on September 11th. This avoided continental complications and meant crossing only one frontier, the one between Latvia and Estonia. I wrote to Mrs. Hunerson, found the date would suit her, and promised I would wire to her from Riga. My ship was called *Baltallin*, and she lay at Hay's Wharf between London Bridge and Tower Bridge, but when I went to board her the tide was so low we could hardly see her. Friends who were seeing me off were quite concerned when they saw the steep angle of the gang plank, and said surely I was not going all that way in such a small craft. But I assured

them that she travelled regularly all the year round between London and Riga.

We sailed with the tide soon after midnight, and next day in fine weather we went up the east coast to Newcastle, where we had to take in some coal. It was very sad sailing up the Tyne and seeing all the shipyards standing idle and silent. This was the peak time of unemployment and it was a most depressing sight. I was quite unprepared for it and certainly I can never forget it. After we had coaled, we crossed the North Sea, and steamed round the northernmost point of Denmark, which is called the Skaw. Sometimes the weather is very bad there, but we were fortunate. The sight of Denmark made me think of the happy visit my sister Mary and I had there thirty-five years earlier. I had, of course, crossed the North Sea many times, but it was exciting to get into the Baltic at last. We passed the Island of Bornholm, and I hoped to see the old Fortress of Visby, but we were not near enough.

It was amusing being the only passenger: no stewardess, of course, was carried, but I had the services of a cabin boy. I asked the boy what time it would be convenient for me to use the bath, for there was only one bathroom, and I did not want to be in the way of the officers. The boy said 9 p.m. would be a good time and that was all right for me, for I always liked my bath in the evening. So, the next evening after we sailed, I came along and was glad to find the bathroom door had a hook inside to fasten it. Next I examined the taps: they weren't really taps, just two cocks with square ends, and on each cock hung a sort of spanner. I realised that the hot water would be very hot and that I ought to run the cold water into the bath first, but there was no indication as to which cock was hot and which cold. So I felt the spanners and found one was cooler than the other. I therefore gave a turn to the cooler spanner and immediately there was a roar and a tremble and the bathroom became full of steam. I rushed out and shouted to the boy, who came running, disappeared into the steam and turned it off. When he came out again, I said: "I turned on the spanner that felt the coolest." He answered: "Well, it's really the other one that turns on the cold water, only the end

of that spanner touches the hot pipe, so it gets very hot." I then asked him to fill the bath for me and after that he always did it, so I had no more alarms.

It was a happy peaceful life on the little ship, either sitting on deck in the lovely weather, or writing letters and reading Chekhov's stories at the writing table in my cabin. We made no call, except the first one at Newcastle, and at last we got into the Dwina River and reached the busy port of Riga. The Customs formalities were brief and easy, and I was glad to find everybody understood Russian, for Latvian is an impossible language. I got a taxi and drove to the station, where I left my suitcase in charge of a very attractive old porter, who looked as if he had stepped straight out of a Russian story book. He had a peaked cap, bushy eyebrows, and a long white beard, and he wore a sort of smock fastened with a broad leather belt. He spoke slowly in a rather soft voice and his whole manner was gentle and protective. I went out into the town and telegraphed Mrs. Hunerson that the train would reach Tartu at 4 a.m. I bought some rolls and cheese and apples for my supper, and then was glad to come back into the railway station, which was lofty and cool; for outside in the streets it was blazing hot, really too hot to walk. So I went into the big, empty refreshment room and ordered coffee, which was excellent. The room itself was beautifully cool, but I noticed some enormous cast-iron stoves, which must be quite indispensable in winter.

At Tartu Eleanor Hunerson was on the platform with her nineteen-year-old daughter, Virge, both of them wreathed in smiles, although it was after 4 a.m. We all got into a taxi and drove over huge cobblestones which made the taxi heave up and down. When we arrived at their flat, the rest of the family were asleep, but I was shown into a pretty bedroom with a great white-tiled stove, plants in pots, and a pale blue silk eiderdown on the bed. After a lovely bath we all three had tea in my bedroom. I think that evening—or rather that early morning—was one of the happiest moments I can remember. There was a sense of being very far away from England and yet of being completely among friends. And all this wonderful experience had come about just because a Lacock neighbour, who was a Guide Commissioner,

had offered hospitality to Eleanor Hunerson, and then had suggested her coming to us for a few days she had still to spare.

At lunch next day, or rather the same day, I met the rest of Eleanor's family. She had four daughters, Helgi, which means "the bright one," Sula, "the thawing snow," Virge, "the courageous one," and Oelma, "the little flower." Helgi was married and lived in Tallinn, though at this time she was in Tartu working for a philology degree at the university. The weather continued to be blazing hot, just as it had been in Riga, and the Hunerson family were highly amused at the warm garments I had brought with me. I was surprised that the university term had begun, for we were only in the middle of September, but their vacations and school holidays seemed to be earlier than ours, as well as shorter.

I don't remember what we ate on that first day, but I know that all the time I stayed with the Hunersons there was an abundance of excellent food, and also some unfamiliar dishes. For breakfast we had coffee and, besides white bread, plates of black rye bread, which I loved, and a variety of cold savouries, many of them home-made. We often had little pickled fish, packed with bay leaves and spices, which I rather liked; they went well with the rye bread. One day, when I was eating them, Eleanor asked me gravely: "What have you done with the intestines?" I felt much confused, for I had eaten the whole thing, not realising that the tiny creatures had anything in them not supposed to be edible. However, Eleanor showed me how to divide them, and I had better table manners in future. Dinner was about 1.30, and we usually had coffee and cakes about half past four, and supper at 8 o'clock in the evening. I was delighted that a real samovar was always used at supper. It seemed strange that the tiny teapot which rested on the samovar of boiling water should be enough for a party of six, or sometimes, if Mr. Hunerson was with us, for seven people; but the tea was always served very weak, and as it was China tea of good quality, this was quite pleasant. Nobody took milk in their tea but everybody took jam. There was a choice of jams and I was always asked what kind I would like. As a matter of fact weak tea with jam in it, especially raspberry jam, is a very good drink. Some of the others put sugar as well as jam into their tea.

While I was at Tartu, Eleanor took me with her on a trip for three days when she had to inspect some companies of Girl Guides and one way and another I really saw a great deal of the country. One day we went by train to the extreme south-east of Estonia, to a place called Pechora. There was a monastery there with a wonderful church, and we were told that it was to this monastery that Ivan the Terrible used to come when he did penance for his crimes. Everyone in Pechora spoke Russian and very few people spoke Estonian, but the notices were printed in both languages. Eleanor had come there partly to see a friend, who was the wife of an army surgeon, and this lady asked us both to lunch with her at her husband's club. The dining-room in this club was very plain and bare, but quite clean, and we were waited upon by a soldier. The first course was soup; a large tureen was put on the table and we helped ourselves. Little Russian pies filled with savoury cabbage were served with the soup; they were about an inch and half long and very good. The next course was a choice of roast pork or stewed beef, served with boiled potatoes, and a big dish of pickled cucumbers in place of a vegetable. Finally we had a cold sweet, sliced apple stewed with fine tapioca. After we had left the club and thanked our hostess, Eleanor said to me: "It's not very polite to tell a guest what you have paid for the meal, but I think you would like to know how much this dinner cost in English money, because everything is so infinitely cheaper out here. It has cost us just 4½d. each!"

We had a look round the monastery and went into the church for part of the service, but I could not understand a word for the Orthodox Service is always said in old Slavonic. We were also taken through an underground passage where lay the coffins of the monks who had died at Pechora. Finally we took the train back to Tartu, which is a journey of several hours. Eleanor and I were in a third-class carriage, where there were some peasant women who had been working in the fields. These were typically Russian in appearance, with their long loose coats, kerchiefs tied over their heads and strips of cloth wound over their ankles and legs, rather like untidy puttees. They laughed a good deal and whispered to each other, and then suddenly brought out

black bread and some kind of sausage from their pockets and ate a meal, after which they quite suddenly went to sleep, each one leaning her head on the shoulder of the one next to her, and the effect was rather like a row of pigeons.

On another occasion Eleanor arranged for me to visit the old city of Narva in the north east, not far from the Russian frontier. She could not come there herself, but she travelled with me from Tartu to Tallinn, saw me into the train for Narva, which left late in the evening, and arranged with a member of the Narva branch of the Y.W.C.A. to meet me when I arrived. The third-class coaches were quite clean and there were sleeping benches with thin mattresses on them. When I woke early in the morning the train was lumbering slowly through flat country dotted with small birch trees: we had frequent stops at small stations and there was a smell of oil shale, which I believe is sometimes used for fuel on these trains. When we reached Narva, Eleanor's friend was on the platform to meet me. She carried me off to get some coffee, and then we went to the Y.W.C.A. lodge where I was to spend the night. This was a sombre-looking building of dark grey stone, like most of the houses in Narva. The inside walls were painted dark green and all the stoves were of a dark colour whereas in Tallinn and Tartu, they were often quite gay, being built of white or light-coloured tiles, and sometimes decorated with designs of flowers. My guide settled me into my bedroom and then took me out to explore the place.

The Narva river, which is broad and rather swift, practically divides the town in two. I noticed odd little wooden floats, evidently fastened to nets, resting on the surface of the water and was told that these nets were for catching lampreys, and that Narva was famous for its lampreys; I was promised some that night for supper with my guide and her husband. Next she took me to the famous tunnel which runs under the river, and along which people can walk for two-thirds of the way. A man admitted us and with him we walked along carrying candles until we reached the point beyond which one cannot go. It was rather a small tunnel and the river running over our heads felt pretty close. The man told us that the portion of the tunnel which was still broken

down was going to be repaired, and that one day it would be possible for people to cross under the river instead of using a bridge. Next, she took me to a point where we had a good view of the two great fortresses: Peter the Great's on the east bank, and the stronghold of Charles XII of Sweden on the west. These two had fought against each other for years, till Peter the Great managed secretly to make the tunnel under the river, and brought his troops across and defeated the Swedish king. After a visit to the ruined castle of Peter the Great, from which we had an excellent view, we spent a very pleasant evening at my guide's flat; except that I did not appreciate the lampreys she had bought especially for me. They might perhaps have been better if they had been salted or smoked, but served plain they seemed to me to taste of river mud and grease, and I never want to try one again.

Before leaving Estonia I tried hard to persuade Helgi to come and stay with us at Lacock, and if possible bring her husband with her. I felt, after having such a wonderful month with them all, the least I could do was to have all the family by turns to spend a month with me, and I wanted to begin with Helgi. She looked a little sad and said: "Thank you, but I do not think it will happen." I went to a toy shop in Tartu and found one of those little wooden swallows which people stick on to the walls of their rooms; I gave it to her and said: "Now, that is to show you that you are really going to cross the sea."

The little wooden swallow must have impressed her, for she really did come to England early in the following summer. I went down to Hay's Wharf to meet the *Baltallin*, and found a rather pale and frightened Helgi, for the ship had reached London before her scheduled time, and I was not on the wharf to meet it. Helgi had never been out of her own country, except once to Switzerland, and then her mother had been with her. I had planned a little sightseeing in London, but she looked so tired that after a short rest at the house of some friends, I took her straight down to Lacock, where she had a couple of days in bed and was quite restored. She had actually been working far too hard for her degree in philology, and I was confirmed in the belief that the

Estonian students were all overworked. But she was very soon all right and able to enjoy new experiences.

But they were not always enjoyable. It was only a couple of days after her arrival, when Helgi and I were busy covering a chair, that a thunderstorm suddenly came up; and soon there was such vivid lightning and such crashes of thunder, coming almost simultaneously, that it was really frightening. I thought once that something had struck the tower, so I went along the gallery to try to see. As I passed through, the rain was driving furiously against the windows. All the air was white with it and I could not see the trees, which were only a few yards away. No one ventured to go out; but after a couple of hours the rain lessened a little, and our faithful friend, Bird, who was in the village when the storm broke, came in and told us he had never seen such a spectacle in his life. The brook which runs through the village had overflowed its banks; in one street the water was running over three feet deep, and the inhabitants were all upstairs unable to come down. Bird's own home was on the other side of the brook, well above the danger line, but of course he could not get there. The rain stopped at about tea time, and at 8 o'clock Helgi and I went out carrying hot water bottles and coffee. We went along the street that was nearest to the brook; by that time there was hardly any water left on the road, but the gardens were still inundated.

Some of the older women were very much shaken: they had been terribly frightened, and one had been pinned against her house wall by the rising flood, until she was rescued by a man, who helped her on to her staircase. Other people were pluckily trying to clean up a bit and joking about the whole thing in a truly British fashion. Our doctor's house was very near the brook, and the locum doctor and his wife were on the upper floor, greatly fearing that the house would come down; but neither that house, nor indeed any house in the village, was damaged—their walls were so thick and strong. Even when the rain stopped, there was still such deep water around the doctor's house that no one could approach it, until one of the Lacock lads, who was over six feet tall, waded in carrying a fishing rod to which he had tied

a parcel of food, and this he managed to hand in through an upper window, for they were without provisions.

Next morning the sun shone brightly, and Helgi and I went into the village again. The people had dragged their heavy furniture into the street, that it might dry, but this was a lengthy job with upholstered things. Most of the families had managed to rush all their smaller articles upstairs, but not all, for the flood took them very much by surprise. The water had at first begun to creep in at the back doors, but after a while it suddenly burst in at the front doors also, in much greater volume, so that there was hardly time to do more than run upstairs. One friend of ours, a district nurse, lost all the records of her cases, which was a real grief to her, for she had been very successful in her career and had saved many a life. Others lost all their family photographs and other things which were very precious to them. Practically all the garden walls had come down, and no wonder; the marvel was that the old houses themselves stood up so well to the strain. It appeared that this sudden inundation of the brook was not so much due to rain as to a cloudburst which took place some three miles higher up. The river Avon near by, which often overflows its banks in winter, was practically unaffected by this sudden storm.

We immediately set about making a collection on behalf of those who had lost their property in the flood; some of the people were touchingly generous, for although they had suffered considerable loss themselves, they insisted on giving money to help those who had been more hardly hit. In the end, all the gardens were replanted and their walls rebuilt, and the generous money help that friends and neighbours gave enabled our people to replace some of their possessions, but not their most precious treasures.

Helgi's English had improved since we met, and she could hold her own in any conversation and greatly liked going about making acquaintance with people. We stayed a few days in Oxford, and this I think was the experience she enjoyed most of all. She had read much about Oxford, but she said the reality exceeded anything she had imagined. We had lovely weather and

the colleges and gardens were looking their best. The singing in New College Chapel impressed her so much that the beauty of it brought tears to her eyes. That evening, as we were going to bed, she said that never in her life had she imagined that anything could be so beautiful. It was a pleasure to take her about, for she was popular with everybody. Her intelligence and her simplicity made an attractive combination. She was both "quick in the uptake" and quite unassuming. She generally had a rather serious expression, but then, at something she heard, or some mistake she realised she had made, her whole face would sparkle with fun. She had a great liking for old people and made friends with Mrs. Hennessy, who was over ninety, and was then living with us at Lacock Abbey. Mrs. Hennessy was one of those rare old people who live in the present more than in the past, and who take a keen interest in contemporary events. She made Helgi tell her a great deal about Estonia, and when they were bidding each other good-bye, the old lady said: "My dear, I shall always love your country for your sake," which touched Helgi deeply. At that time, Estonia was still in her brief period of independence. We all missed Helgi after she had gone and the friendship deepened between us.

We had a great sorrow in the November after she left. My very dear brother, who had been ill for some months, but had recovered and come back to his home, had a sudden heart attack, and, in a moment, passed on. His wife was with him, his younger son in the next room. I was in London when we got the news and I found it very hard to believe. He was a good son, a good husband, a good father, and I had always found him the dearest and kindest of brothers.

The following summer I went to the Hunersons again, and was lucky enough to pay Pechora another visit. I also experienced a real Russian steam bath. Eleanor hadn't one in her own house, but arranged for us to spend a night with Miss Jacobson, the art teacher at the High School. We took train to a little hamlet not very far from Tartu and there met Miss Jacobson, who took us to her pretty cottage deep in the woods. She gave us tea and fruit, and then we all walked deeper into the woods, until we

reached the little bath house. The fire had been lighted some time before and we saw blue smoke coming out of the chimney. There were two rooms in the bath house, one a tiny sitting-room, and the other was the bath. Miss Jacobson had her bath first and then Mrs. Hunerson took me in with her. There were two wooden shelves against the wall, a pile of stones that had been heated by the fire, and some big buckets of water. I undressed and lay down on the top shelf; Eleanor put her clothes and mine into the sitting-room, and then poured water on to the hot stones. The room filled with dense hot steam; it felt rather like a Turkish bath, but even more pleasant from the sweet smell of burning birch logs. I lay there and Eleanor lay on the lower shelf. From time to time she threw more water on to the hot stones. I had at first been a little shy about having no bathing dress, but the dense steam made a complete veil and no one uses any bathing dress in these baths. At intervals Eleanor beat me with a little bunch of birch twigs, which are supposed to stimulate the skin. The idea of being struck by birch twigs, even small ones, is unpleasant, but these little things were thick with leaves and quite soft, in fact they were more like wet ostrich feathers than anything else. I felt lazy and happy, so when Eleanor told me I had been in the bath long enough for the first time I was quite sorry. We had lots of little birch leaves clinging to us which had to be rinsed off. The Russians have a saying about the kind of person one cannot shake off: "She clings to me like bath foliage." I now understood exactly what this meant. After we had dressed, Eleanor made me rest for half an hour in the little sitting-room, and then we walked back through the forest for a mushroom supper, and a bed at Miss Jacobson's. Next morning we went back to Tartu again.

Eleanor had several times said that I ought to see her country in the winter, especially at Christmas. So in December 1938, I sailed again from Hay's Wharf, not travelling this time in the *Baltallin* but in a larger steamer called the *Baltavia*. She could carry about twenty passengers, and was quite smart, but I did not like her as much as the little *Baltallin*. The weather was bitterly cold and there was not much temptation to be on deck, especially as this ship burned oil fuel and the smell of it was very disagree-

able if one was walking on the lee-side of the ship while on the weather-side the wind was like a knife. In order to have some sort of exercise I used to walk quickly along the deck on the weather side for a few minutes, and then rush into the shelter of a doorway to recover my breath, and then nip out again for another speedy little walk. The air grew colder and colder as we went north, and when we finally got into the harbour at Tallinn our decks were coated with ice, from the spray freezing as it fell, and the ship's railing had become a solid wall of ice. I wished someone could have photographed us as we came in, for we looked for all the world as if we had returned from the arctic regions. There were only 28 degrees of frost, so we were not below zero, but the bitter wind and the freezing spray made it feel colder. I marvelled at the sailors, who went cheerfully carrying cups of tea and sliding about on the icy decks, which grew ever more slippery with the constantly falling spray.

Helgi and her husband were there to meet me, and their welcome was as warm as ever. It was amusing to see all the different kinds of sledges. Every sort of vehicle had had its wheels removed and was fixed upon runners for the winter.

Helgi's flat was very warm, and the double windows were all in place, with their little movable openings for ventilation. The morning after I arrived she took me with her to market. The Tallinn market is very large and all in the open air. Every stand and table was loaded with food, in expectation of Christmas; the vendors were muffled in thick coats with their fur caps pulled down over their ears, but mostly their hands were bare. There were piles of rabbits, poultry and fish, and everything was frozen stiff. I saw a man pick up a large eel by the head and he held it out from him like a walking stick. A woman accidentally pushed against a table which was piled with geese and knocked it over; the geese all fell on the ground with a noise as if a cart of stones had been upset. People were carrying home rabbits as stiff as cricket bats, and I was fascinated by the fish stalls, where the things which one expected to be wet and flabby were all rigid, and made a rattling sound when they were pushed about. Helgi bought a stiff goose, and we carried it home and put it between the

double panes of the kitchen window, which was quite equal to a refrigerator.

I shall never forget the wind at Tallinn that winter. Though Helgi's house was beautifully warm, and in the narrow streets there was a fair amount of shelter, out on the open road we met an east wind which came, if not from Siberia, at least from the Ural Mountains, for there was nothing but flat land between them and us. To use an Irish expression, I could only face that wind by walking backwards, glancing occasionally over my shoulder. Fortunately, there were many days of complete calm, and even when the wind was most bitter I never caught a cold. There is wonderful protection in hot stoves, good food, warm clothes, and most of all, in friendly and warm-hearted company.

Two days later Helgi and I went to Tartu, where we found Eleanor, Sula, Virge and Tikki. Mr. Hunerson and Elmer Just, Helgi's husband, joined us and we all had great fun unpacking. Helgi decided we should give each other our presents forthwith and not wait for Christmas Day. Just before I left England, I received a parcel from South Africa, which contained some "chinkering chees," the pretty white flowers which travel so well. They arrived just in time for me to put a bunch of them into my baggage, and it was great fun to see the effect they produced when I unpacked them. It was almost magical to see these little white flowers opening their buds so calmly, thousands of miles from the place where they had been gathered; and Mrs. Hunerson called in many a friend to look at them. They lasted well until the time when I had to leave Estonia.

Eleanor had a turkey for Christmas dinner, as she knew this was our English custom, but I think most of our neighbours had goose. In the evening we had a big Christmas tree in the drawing-room and we sang hymns and carols round it. There was a little Christmas tree also in every bedroom, and we went into each room in turn to sing a hymn by the tree. A few days later we all went to the cemetery in the evening and saw a very pretty sight. The graves were covered with thick snow, but on nearly every one of them was laid a little wreath made from sprigs of fir or perhaps artificial green leaves. Holly will not grow in Estonia; the climate

is too cold for it, though they have a few holly bushes under glass in the botanical gardens. Each of these wreaths had a night light burning in the centre and the slight warmth caused the snow to melt a little, so that as one walked through the cemetery the light seemed to come up mysteriously from beneath the snow to illuminate the green circlet. I asked Eleanor if this was an old Christmas custom, but she said it was not; it had only come into vogue recently. It looked very lovely, however, the little lights shining softly in every direction.

When I had been with the Hunersons about three weeks, I received a telegram telling me that my sister Mary, whom I had taken to Mentone in October and left happily installed there, had been taken ill. However, better news followed and I decided to return as usual by sea instead of attempting a difficult overland journey. The *Baltavia* was sailing the following week, so I booked a passage by her to London, and then had a few days at Lacock before going out to Mentone. I found Grace there when I arrived, and we had a few hours together before she returned to Scotland. Mary was able to leave the nursing home a few days later and I stayed on with her in a quiet little hotel until the beginning of April, when she was strong enough for the journey to England. She was rather loth to leave Mentone, now that she was better able to enjoy being there, but the clouds of a possible war were gathering, and I was afraid it might be difficult to bring an invalid home in tolerable comfort if we postponed any longer. After we reached England, my thoughts often went back to this, my third visit to Estonia, and I wondered if it would prove to be my last. I wonder still.

It was soon after this that I made the acquaintance of an interesting elderly lady, one Miss Florence White, who had written a book on traditional English cookery containing many historical and unusual recipes, the result of much research on the subject, and I was glad to meet her. She was then living in an hotel in Fareham and was very courageous, for she had slender means and was by no means strong, besides having lost the sight of one eye. I went to see her and propounded the idea of having a two-day cookery exhibition at Lacock Abbey in order to show how

many excellent things had been made, and could still be made, in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Miss White was much taken with the notion: she had once held a small cookery exhibition in London, but nothing on a large scale. We decided to hold ours early in June, and started at once to collect specimens of local and traditional dishes. We wrote to every place which was famous for some special delicacy. Bakewell for Bakewell tarts, Eccles for Eccles cakes, Melton Mowbray for pork pies, Banbury for Banbury cakes, Cornwall for Cornish pasties, Shrewsbury for Shrewsbury cakes, Coventry for Coventry godcakes, and so on. These genuine things were very different from those which pass elsewhere under the same name. Our plan was to write to the place, to the actual maker, if we knew his name, and send for a small quantity. If the sample was good, and if it was properly packed, we ordered a definite amount to be sent to us in time for the exhibition. It was remarkable how many of these traditional dainties there were, many of which we had never heard mentioned. From Scotland we had mutton hams, haggis, potted head, oatcakes, and many other things. From Ireland, barnbrack and potato cakes, from Wales, bakestone bread and Welsh cheesecakes. We also had a great variety of cheeses; Cheshire and Cheddar, Wensleydale and Stilton, Caerphilly from Wales, Blue Vinney from Dorset, Dunlop from Ayrshire, and an unusual type of cream cheese from Cambridge. This cheese was partly soft white milkcurd, and partly a yellow cream cheese. A layer of the white cheese was laid upon a sort of fine straw mat, the yellow cream cheese was spread upon it, and then a second layer of white, the whole forming a sort of sandwich. It was sold by the pound, and looked very pretty cut crosswise in slices. We also showed two cheeses of which I had never heard before, Leicester and Derby; both were good, especially the Derby cheese. We found that in our large hall there was room to show specimens of all these and many other things.

Besides the exhibits, we arranged for cookery demonstrations to be given in the ballroom, where we fixed up a temporary platform, having carefully protected our beautiful dancing floor. As we had neither gas nor electricity in the house, we had gas

brought in as a temporary measure from the village, and fixed a gas stove and refrigerator on the platform.

To give variety I had two English demonstrators, one from Bath and one from Hampshire, and two Scotch demonstrators, from Edinburgh and Aberdeen respectively. I was much pleased also, to get a letter from the Ministry of Health, offering us the services of one of their best demonstrators; an offer which we gladly accepted.

Five cookery demonstrations were given on each of the two days, and the room was always full. Our Great Hall at Lacock Abbey presented a most unusual appearance by the time everything was ready. The big open fireplace had an iron cauldron hung in it (there was of course no fire burning), and near it we placed a great meat block and an outsize marble mortar, both of the eighteenth century, and besides these we had a bronze mortar of the time of Henry VIII. All these, together with several other old-fashioned implements, had been formerly used in the Abbey kitchen, and looked completely at home. On a raised block in the centre of the hall stood a boar's head, and on various tables and stands throughout the room were displayed many national dishes, English, Scotch, Irish and Welsh, over two hundred in number. All these dishes of course were cold; the hot ones were cooked at the demonstrations in the ballroom, before a highly interested audience. Fortunately this room, when it was full of people, was excellent for carrying the voice. An authority on dietetics gave two lectures each day in the South Gallery.

A pleasant and unexpected message reached us from Mr. Hunerson, who was in London on his way to Aberystwyth, in which he asked if he might spend a couple of days at Lacock Abbey. We were, of course, delighted and managed to tuck him in, although the house was very full. He was most anxious to see the abbey, about which Helgi had told him so much. I think, too, he was interested in the cookery exhibition, and tried to converse with our lady demonstrator from Aberdeen. His words came haltingly and he could not always understand her, but she spoke slowly and clearly, and they had common ground in discussing agricultural subjects, with which both of them were

familiar. It was amusing and also very pleasant to see how they did somehow manage to converse.

Several representatives of important papers came down to interview us a couple of weeks before the show, and the *Observer* of the previous Sunday carried a front page article on the subject. As a result, we had very full attendances and covered all our expenses, leaving a credit balance of £20, which we sent to Miss Florence White to help her in starting her English Food and Cookery Association. This venture of hers was unfortunately short-lived and soon came to an end. She herself died a couple of years later.

The disposal of the actual food was managed more easily than I expected, for at the close of the second day, when we invited purchasers, everyone was eager to buy. I wondered whether we should be left with the great boar's head on our hands. It had cost £5 and was well worth that sum, being beautifully prepared and decorated. However, someone had the good idea of selling it in slices at 4/– a pound, and everybody came along asking for half-pounds and quarter-pounds until every morsel had disappeared, and we found we had made a few shillings' profit. The dishes made by the demonstrators were, of course, sold at the end of each lesson according to the usual practice. Next morning the hall was cleared, and the furniture replaced in position; and we found no harm had come to our beloved dancing floor, or to anything else. One pleasant result was that we were able to secure orders for a good many people, who were very glad of them, and we had many grateful letters from bakers, pastrycooks, sauce-makers and others whose addresses were given to inquirers.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Lacock in the Second World War – Gift to National Trust – The Past Growing into the Future

THE outbreak of the Second World War found us in Lacock not altogether unprepared, because the storm clouds had been lowering for so long. But we had, on the whole, been preparing for things that did not happen. We had been learning how to deal with gas attacks and gas contamination and, thank heaven, we never had to apply our knowledge. We knew, too, that all we were and all we possessed was no longer our own, but held at the disposal of our country, and I don't think anybody resented this; it was so obviously the only course to adopt in a great emergency.

We had been told that Lacock Abbey would probably be required to house a London elementary school of some fifty children, with two or three teachers. We were not told the proportion of girls to boys or whether we should have men teachers or women, but we got on with the preparations as best we could. Fortunately we had a number of folding beds that I had once got in for a Girl Guide camp, and this made it possible to put three or four beds into every bedroom. When the day of evacuation came, however, we had a message that no school children were to sleep at the Abbey, but were only to do their lessons there; instead, we were to put up six London mothers with one child each. Also a man teacher was to stay with us, besides an L.C.C. official and his wife.

We heard that the London school children had just arrived and were billeted in and about the village, and would start their lessons at the Abbey in the following week. We quickly readjusted our arrangements and took in the six London mothers, all of whom came from Shepherd's Bush. The day of the evacuation was very hot and by the evening everybody was thoroughly

tired, but we got them all accommodated and they were glad to rest and really grateful. Next day the L.C.C. official and his wife went back to London, but the teacher, Mr. Oscar Tapper, remained with us and was a great help. It was not difficult to plan a school in the long South Gallery, for it had three windows on the sunny side and could easily be used as three classrooms. Our own Lacock schoolmaster helped us with the planning; he could not have taken any extra children into his own school, as he had already over a hundred pupils.

The London school was St. George's from Edge Street, Campden Hill, and there were eighty-five children, so it was a blessing we had room in the Abbey. We arranged for them to enter the house directly from the cloisters, and they came up to their classroom by a spiral staircase, which was a great joy to them. Also, we were able to use the old chaplain's room, opening off the cloisters, for the infants' classroom, so that the older classes could have more space in the gallery above. Willing hands, led by the London headmaster, Mr. Steel, with Mr. Tapper and others, soon got the furniture moved out and the L.C.C. desks brought in, so that one week after the evacuees arrived we were all ready to start lessons. There were forty boys and forty-five girls, and the average age was ten.

Before school actually started, I had a feeling that the teachers, including the headmaster, were not quite sure that I would really let the children work in the South Gallery. I fancied they thought I was the kind of grand lady who was liable to change her mind. So one day I asked them to tea, and told them that I knew a great deal about London children and liked them very much. When I added that I had served on the staff of the Roan Girls' School at Greenwich for over three years as a cookery teacher, they were greatly astonished, because that was just about the last thing they expected to hear. After that, however, they felt much more at home with me, and we all grew to be great friends.

We were fortunate both in the staff and in the pupils of St. George's School. It is pleasant to record that during the five years that the children came daily to the Abbey to do their lessons,

their behaviour was exemplary. Sometimes they were left alone in their classroom, but no child ever wrote or drew anything upon the cream-coloured walls, though they must have felt tempted to do so. Nor did they break a window, nor pick any flowers on their way between the lodge gates and the Abbey. Except for removing the furniture and hanging some linen over the bookshelves in the gallery, we changed nothing. The children were greatly interested in the pictures, and gave many of them names, which they chose themselves, and they took a sort of protective interest in everything in their classroom. Any new pupil who arrived would be told firmly what was allowed and not allowed. It was rather a delightful example of that discipline which grows out of real love for some person or place; it is entirely self-imposed and imposed with pleasure. This discipline is in a completely different category from any discipline that can be applied from outside.

Two small window panes were broken during the school occupation, and strangely enough in each case by a teacher, which I feel sure must have given great joy to the pupils.

I must say we really missed the children when they finally left. I gave the headmaster a photograph of the south front of the Abbey, where their classrooms were, and also a letter saying how much I appreciated their good behaviour. Both the letter and the photograph are now framed, and hang in their school in London.

Our six London mothers did not fit into Lacock life as readily as the London school children. But it was easier for us at the Abbey than for those who gave hospitality in the village. We could set aside a part of the house for them, with their own staircase, and they could talk to each other about the homes and the husbands they had been obliged to leave, and all about their anxieties and troubles, without having their hostess and the family present. I thought they might possibly quarrel among themselves, and that as they all came from the same district they might bring some old feuds with them, but this did not prove to be the case. Four of the six were very untidy and moreover could not cook. The other two, especially a little Glasgow woman who had settled in London, were quite orderly, and they did the cooking by turns.

All of them were very late in the morning and sat up late at night, as also did their children, who were all under school age and quite undisciplined. I felt they had a good deal to learn from our country people, and maybe they did learn something, though it was not very apparent. They had plenty of cockney gaiety and I used to enjoy talking with them. I was delighted when I heard that they proposed to give us a pantomime at Christmas. One evacuee, not one of those at the Abbey, had some slight experience of the stage, I think she had done tap dancing; having a plucky spirit, she very soon had rehearsals going. They chose *Aladdin* for their pantomime, her mother wrote the book, and we had some really amusing singing and dancing. I don't know what was original, and what was borrowed, but anyhow I enjoyed it, and they made £10 for the Red Cross. They proudly said: "We wanted to show Lacock what London could do." I felt they were really showing us what Shepherd's Bush could do, and their little pantomime was something to be proud of. I asked them to invite their husbands for Christmas, and several of the men were able to come. Here again, I thought we might have some fighting, but all was peace, and I heard cheerful singing on Christmas night. But, as the spring drew on, they went away by degrees, till only the little Glasgow woman and her child were left: she found a job in the neighbourhood, so they also left the Abbey.

Besides the school and the mothers, we had been asked by our billeting officer to receive what I can only call "compulsory boarders." I was allowed to keep my Australian friend, who had no home of her own, but the remaining bedrooms had to be available for other people. When the mothers had left we were able to re-arrange the accommodation. Our boarders were usually Service men with their wives, but we also had architects, engineers, and surveyors who were working on a Government scheme in the county. We very rarely had a room empty. One Christmas, some of the boarders wanted to have their relatives with them over the holiday, and so we had seventeen people staying with us, of whom the oldest was a man of eighty-three and the youngest a little boy of six. The situation was by no means easy, for rationing was in force, and these people's ration

books were often out of order. Also, while some were pleasant and courteous, others were the reverse, and this proved to be my hardest job of the war. No doubt the absence of gas and electricity was a trial to them, but I kept my charges low, for that very reason. When, at times, the boarders were discourteous, I thought sympathetically of those professional landladies who have, all the year round, to make their living by taking people into their homes. I, at least, knew that my task was only for the duration of the war, whereas the real landlady must keep on till she can afford to stop.

As a matter of fact, I ceased to be a landlady sooner than might be expected, for we were told we should have to accommodate troops for a time, and that meant I could give notice to all the boarders. This change made things much easier for me as I would now only have to board one or two officers, the men having their own cookhouse. The first troops to come were Gunners; their place was taken by the Rifle Brigade, then Signallers, then Army Service Corps (who stayed with us for close on two years), later Army Ordnance, and lastly a small detachment of American troops in charge of stores. I still had my Australian friend with me and life went on smoothly. The soldiers were most orderly and they generally seemed very sorry when they had to leave Lacock; one man in the Army Service Corps said that leaving the Abbey was like leaving home. We had troops, usually about thirty in number, staying in the house for over three years, and they never gave us any trouble. Although they necessarily occupied two of our best bedrooms, six to a room, nothing was injured or knocked about. They had, of course, their own furniture.

When the last of the soldiers had gone, I realised that we would not be allowed to leave the rooms empty, and I was half afraid I might have to take boarders again, so I asked the billeting officer whether, in view of the housing shortage, he could give permission for part of the Abbey to be let as a flat. He rang up at once to say that not only would he give permission, but that there was a lady with children for whom he was most anxious to find better accommodation. She called on me the following day and,

as soon as some necessary changes were made, she and her children came to the Abbey to live; they have been there ever since. We arranged two other small flats, all with the co-operation of the billeting officer, who was most helpful. The tenants who took these flats are also still there: in fact, no one ever wants to leave the Abbey.

The next thing that happened was that, with the full consent of the family, I offered Lacock Abbey, the village and Manor Farm, to the National Trust, who, although the war was still going on, accepted it gladly. This decision on their part was a great relief to me, for increased taxation would have made it impossible to continue keeping the Abbey and the village in proper repair. The other farms I sold to the sitting tenants, so no one was disturbed or displaced by the change. The National Trust also took on my tenants in the flats.

Now that any invasion was very unlikely, we felt we could dig up the Magna Carta again. It had been very carefully packed, its leather case wrapped in flannel, and the whole enclosed in a metal box and buried under the stone floor of one of the monastic rooms, lest the enemy should reach the house. I must admit I felt rather anxious as I watched the men digging up the box, but we found all the contents were perfectly dry and in good order. As soon as there was no further risk of an air attack in London, the Keeper of the Manuscripts came from the British Museum to fetch it.

The duties of the second war seemed to me heavier than those of the first, partly because it was necessary to stay practically all the time in the same place; I have always found this rather a strain. Also, when we were having air raids on Bristol or the Midlands, the 'planes went over our heads. We had to deal with the possibility of incendiary bombs falling on our very complicated roofs, so we fixed sheets of corrugated iron to deflect them and throw them on to the courtyard, but none ever fell. Also, we arranged one of our vaulted monastic rooms as a shelter, and when a warning came we trooped down there. This happened once or twice while the London mothers were with us, and the children thoroughly enjoyed the excitement. Later on, the raids became

more frequent and more noisy. Old Mrs. Hennessy, who stayed with us during the latter part of the war, and who was wonderfully clear about many things, never could quite understand why she had sometimes to be carried down to the shelter during the night. She did not realise that the danger came from the air, and she indignantly told us to prevent the enemy from entering the house: "Can't any of you girls shoot?" she cried, "If I only had a gun, I'd soon fire it." But in spite of her ninety-eight years neither the excitement nor the fatigue did her any harm.

It was towards the end of the war that I had an unexpected piece of luck in the matter of teaching. I have always been very fond of modern languages, and found the study of them, or the teaching of them, a great pleasure. In my girlhood, I was once asked what I would most like to be able to do; my answer was rather comprehensive: "I would like to be able to sing in all languages, to dance in all languages, and to cook in all languages." I need hardly say this ideal has never been attained, though I still think it is a very attractive one. As the years went on, I felt I was likely to forget my Russian, as I had no practice. Then it fell out that a neighbour of ours was talking to the headmistress of Westonbirt, who told her she had a girl at the school who wanted to learn Russian, and that she could not find a teacher. My friend suggested me, and though I felt rather rusty, I was sure I could do something to help an absolute beginner. This girl was a very good pupil and teaching her was a real enjoyment. I taught her for three terms (often having to work pretty hard to keep ahead of her), and then a younger girl came on, who proved as good as the elder one. I had, of course, to take them separately, and this meant going to Westonbirt on two mornings a week, for about three and a half hours each morning. It was hard work in a way, but most enjoyable, and this interlude of teaching, coming twice a week throughout the term, made a very pleasant variety in my life. Both the girls did well at Cambridge, and I shall always look back with pleasure to the hours spent with them. During the last term of my teaching, I had the invaluable help of a lady, by birth Armenian, but speaking excellent Russian, who came to stay at Lacock.

It is interesting to look back and notice how many foreign

guests have stayed at Lacock Abbey. During my grandfather's minority, his distant cousin, Lady Shrewsbury, rented the house for a time, and gave shelter to some French clergy who had been obliged to flee from France after the convulsions of the Revolution. Also we were told that Lady Elisabeth Talbot, my great-grandmother, received Polish guests when their country was seized by Russia and Austria. Our great aunt, Horatia, was deeply interested in the sufferings of the Poles, and composed a book of songs, which was published and sold for their benefit. She dedicated the book to Prince Adam Czartoryski, and I believe members of both the Czartoryski and Dombrovski families stayed at the Abbey. Later, in my uncle's time, we received some Belgian refugees until a home could be arranged for them, and between the two wars I sometimes had Russian guests. I have noticed that in Lacock village there is little or none of that prejudice against foreigners which is found in many country places. I think possibly the fact of so many people from foreign countries coming to stay at the Abbey, and being seen about in the village, has helped the local inhabitants to feel at home with them, and to realise that these visitors were just human beings like themselves, but exiled from their country and therefore to be treated with sympathy.

There is one thing about Lacock Abbey which is remarkable and of which I think we can be proud. Through all the seven hundred years that have elapsed since the house was built, we have no record of a murder, or of anyone being deprived of his inheritance; none, in fact, of the usual, one might say the classical reasons, for a troubled spirit to go about seeking redress. We have no legend of a ghost, and that is rare, surely, in a home of such antiquity. I myself have no psychic gift, but those who have, tell me that they are conscious of a wonderful serenity when they come into the house. One man expressed his surprise that I was not aware, as he was, of beneficent beings around us. He added: "If ever you do see or hear anything, it will all be beautiful and protective."

Children are not afraid here; I have known them run cheerfully about in the long corridors, even when it was getting dark. One little girl of five, who had come with her mother to tea, expressed a wish to remain behind and stay the night, when the

others were leaving, I said: "But mummy's going home, you wouldn't like to stay here without mummy, would you?" "I wouldn't mind," she answered, "I like this place." She left very regretfully. An eight-year-old niece, not long out of a nursing home, came to us with her parents, and was put to bed early. I thought, as she had been ill, she might not want to be alone, and suggested that one of us should go and sit with her. But her mother said: "She's never frightened at Lacock," and sure enough, when I went along to see her, she was quite serene and happy.

One old friend told me she was conscious of a fragrance in the air at Lacock Abbey; and indeed there was a certain scent I can remember in the old days, when we used to come and stay with Uncle Charles. It was not like flowers, or like spices, but more like the smell of newly baked bread, only more ethereal, as one might suppose bread would smell in a higher state of existence. After I came to live permanently at Lacock, however, I could not smell it any more, and was rather sorry. Strangely enough, when I came back after spending six months in South Africa, I could smell it again, to my joy, but only for the first few hours. Many people have spoken to me about the sense of peace and feeling of security they have in the Abbey. It has been noticed even by some who have not entered the house or the cloisters, but simply walked round the outside of the building.

Our village people, too, are conscious of this serenity, and they are always delighted when any festivity or celebration can be held in the house or the grounds. That was, in part, why they co-operated so well at the time of the pageant.

There was great rejoicing in Lacock when the Second World War was at last over. We had a thanksgiving service in the church, and in the evening everybody danced in the streets. It was delightful to have no more blackout, and to let the light from all the windows stream into the street. Little coloured lamps were hung across the gates and doorways, and the effect was very cheering and gay, after the weary years of darkening our homes every night. A radiogram was produced and we danced merrily, on the open space in front of the church. The street was soon full of dancers, some of whom had even managed to make themselves

fancy head-dresses. The mistress of one of our shops had a brilliant idea: she brought out every available chair and bench from her home, her neighbours doing the same, and she put them along the pavement, so that the older people could watch the dancing. Next, she made tea and cut sandwiches, and very soon trays of refreshments were being carried out into the street, and we were enjoying a delightful out-of-doors evening party. Instead of charging us anything, she asked us to show our gratitude by helping the Red Cross, and she herself made the collection, to which everyone gave liberally and gladly.

There was something rather medieval about that street dancing, and I think there may have been many occasions in past centuries when people felt the only way they could express their thankfulness and relief was by springing to their feet and starting to dance.

Not long after the Second World War was over, I had another opportunity to visit America, as briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter. This arose from the British Museum's having agreed (and I was very glad they had agreed) to lend the Lacock Magna Carta for two years to the Library of Congress at Washington. As the document had so lately been in my possession, I was invited to be present at the ceremony when our Ambassador, Lord Inverchapel, would formally hand it over to the care of the librarian.

I received this invitation through the Director of the British Museum, and though the idea was most attractive to me, I had to tell him that I should not be able to afford even the cheapest passage to America. He then told me that the British Government was meeting all expenses of the journey, which was a delightful surprise. He asked for my passport, and when he sent it back to me stamped "Government Official" I was deeply impressed; as I was also by the fact that they had taken me a first-class passage on the *Queen Elizabeth*.

We had a good voyage: the Atlantic was just settling down after a gale and the great rollers were tremendous, the biggest I had ever seen. Our Consul met me at New York, and I went straight to Washington, where I was the guest of our Minister, Sir John Balfour. Next day we had a lunch party at the Embassy, and then I was taken all over the Library of Congress. On the

following day the ceremony took place. Lord Inverchapel made an excellent speech, and he kindly gave me a copy of it, which I still have. Quite unexpectedly, the librarian, after our Ambassador had spoken, called upon me. I was not prepared, of course, but fortunately I don't mind speaking, and the audience was very sympathetic. After the handing-over ceremony was completed, the librarian gave a party to about a hundred guests. I stayed over a week with the Balfours, and was then invited by the American Government to stay at Blair Lee House. This was a very attractive old building, just opposite the White House, where official visitors are asked to stay. I only slept and breakfasted there, for I had many invitations out, and was glad to see more of the city than had been possible on my former visit.

A week later I went to New York, as the guest of the English Speaking Union and the Garden Club of America. They arranged for me to stay at the Waldorf-Astoria, but that was again a case of bed and breakfast, for I was asked out to all other meals. One kind lady had me to dinner on New Year's Eve, and after dinner two of her daughters drove me all round New York to see the illuminations and the crowds in the streets: it was a very gay sight. New Year's Day I spent with Mrs. Morris in Philadelphia, talking over old times, and the following day, my last before sailing, I went shopping through very snowy streets, to buy presents to take back to England. I started for home, again in the *Queen Elizabeth*, after just three weeks in the United States, but there had been so much variety, it seemed very much longer.

When I reached Lacock again, our first concern was to arrange a coming-of-age party for my eldest grandniece, which went off happily and well.

My own life has been rather like a kaleidoscope, and I have had to learn a good deal from Lacock Abbey, especially its adaptability. Sometimes an old house gives the impression that it is dying, some even seem already dead, but this is only when they are unloved, neglected or misused. Of course, every house, like every human body, is made of material things, which are perishable, but there is also the personality, both of the house and of the body, which does not perish with the material expression of it;

the richer and the more varied the experiences of the house, the stronger its personality, and the more it has to give to the world.

Lacock Abbey was not only consecrated to its sacred use—the training of women for the service of God—in the year 1232, but it had already been planned in a spirit of prayer and thankfulness by a good woman in memory of her beloved husband. Neither she, nor anyone else, could foresee how chequered would be the fate of the house she had so lovingly planned and built, nor, indeed, could she know what a happy family home it would become. There are not many letters dating from the earlier years: those we have were mostly written in the early nineteenth century and later, but they speak, for the most part, of harmony and tranquillity. From the time of my great grandmother, Lady Elisabeth Talbot, with her varied accomplishments and her international interests, through the patient self-effacing labours of my grandfather in the realm of science, supported, as he undoubtedly was, by the joy which the great variety of his interests gave him; to the quiet, conscientious life of my Uncle Charles, I believe the harmony has continued. Our Aunt Rosamond brought a new inspiration when she came from the larger world outside, and since her time the opportunities have been many and varied, in fact, they have come so thick, one upon another, that it has been difficult to seize them; but Lacock Abbey has always been ready to adopt the role of a chameleon and change its colour as required. I remember in my uncle's time, when life was necessarily sometimes very quiet, I used to feel that the house didn't really want to be so quiet, but would like to have a party: if that were so, that desire has certainly been satisfied.

I had a special sense of fulfilment when we were able to use the sacristy of the Abbey for a church service, during a three days' conference that the Girls' Diocesan Association was holding here. I wondered how many years it could be since that building had last been used for Christian worship.

The manysidedness of Lacock Abbey is one of its charms. A cultivated and delightful French lady, who spent only a brief half-hour going round the house with me, wrote afterwards: "I so much admired this beautiful old Abbey, of which the nobility

does not destroy the gaiety." I expect, if we knew it, the nuns were very gay at times, when they were enjoying their simnels and wine that were allowed them on festival days. Also John Bunyan, though we think of him as a strict Puritan, had another side to his character. After Mr. Great-Heart, accompanied by Christiana and her family, with Mr. Feeble-Mind and Mr. Ready-to-Halt, had conquered Giant Despair, and rescued poor Mr. Despondency, with his daughter, Much-Afraid, from the prisons of Doubting Castle, Bunyan tells us:—

> ". . . they were very jocund and merry. Now Christiana, if need was, could play upon the viol, and her daughter Mercy, upon the lute: so since they were so merry disposed, she played them a lesson, and Ready-to-Halt would dance. So he took Despondency's daughter, Much Afraid, by the hand, and to dancing they went, on the road. True, he could not dance without one crutch in his hand; but I promise you he footed it well: also the girl was to be commended, for she answered the music handsomely."

I have a pleasant feeling that Lacock Abbey is rather like a tree which will go on growing, even if most of the people who have sat under its shade have moved on into another world. I desire above all things that it may always keep the spirit in which it was founded and be used in the service of God. I wish that it may adapt itself to all the changes through which we are living, so as to present this spirit sympathetically enough to reach and touch contemporary thought. Whether this could best be done as a Women's College, I do not know. A family home can do much to show the Christian spirit, if it opens its doors and its heart to all who need it. This is not always easy, but George Eliot wrote: "It is not true that Love makes all things easy, but it makes us long to do what is most difficult."

I should like to see into the future and know what Lacock Abbey's next engagements are going to be, but, in the meantime, I can only end upon a note of thankfulness for its creation and preservation, and for all the blessings it has brought to me, which I doubt not it will bring to others in the days to come.

THE END

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